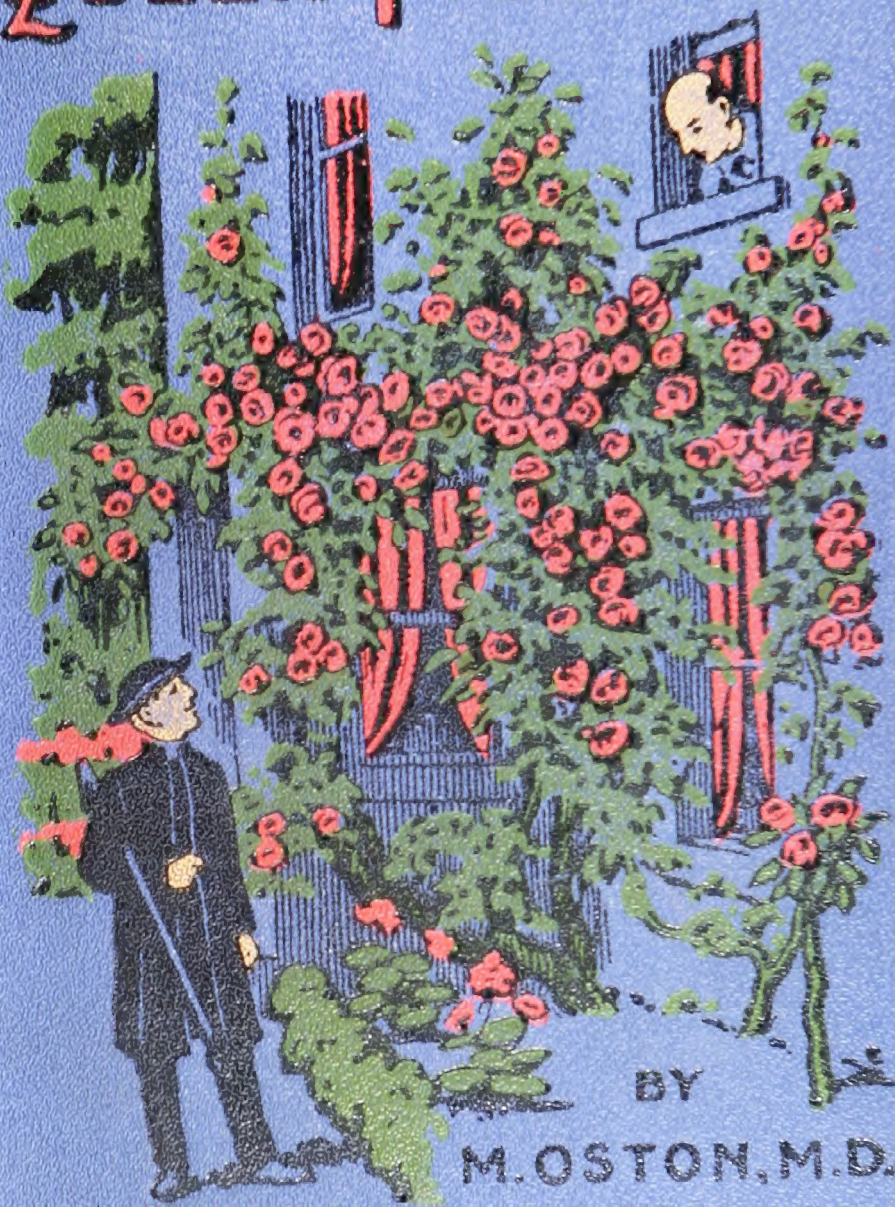


QUEER PATIENTS



Cornell University Library

BOUGHT WITH THE INCOME
FROM THE
SAGE ENDOWMENT FUND
THE GIFT OF
Henry W. Sage
1891

A. 266054

25/VII/12

The date shows when this volume was taken.
To renew this book copy the call No. and give to
the librarian.

10 Ag '12

29 Ag '18

JUN 11 1928

HOME USE RULES.

All Books subject to Recall.

Books not in use for instruction or research are returnable within 4 weeks.

Volumes of periodicals and of pamphlets are held in the library as much as possible. For special purposes they are given out for a limited time.

Borrowers should not use their library privileges for the benefit of other persons.

Students must return all books before leaving town. Officers should arrange for the return of books wanted during their absence from town.

Books needed by more than one person are held on the reserve list.

Books of special value and gift books, when the giver wishes it, are not allowed to circulate.

Readers are asked to report all cases of books marked or mutilated.

Do not deface books by marks and writing.

arV17126 Cornell University Library

Queer patients.



3 1924 031 303 534
olin,anx

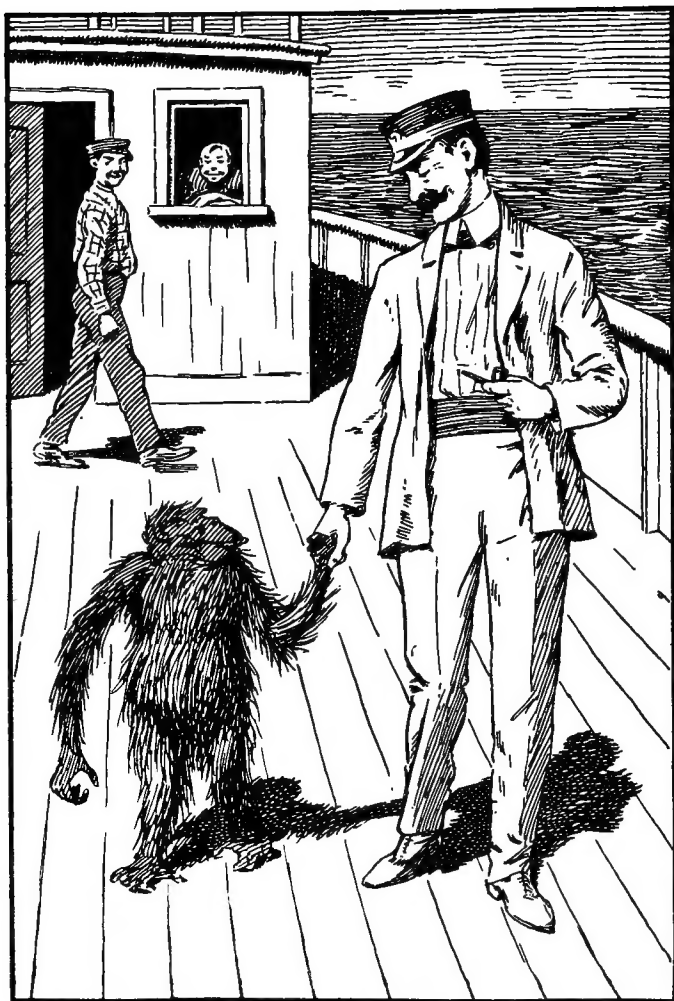


Cornell University Library

The original of this book is in
the Cornell University Library.

There are no known copyright restrictions in
the United States on the use of the text.

QUEER PATIENTS



HAND IN HAND "NICE BOY" AND I PROMENADED THE DECK

QUEER PATIENTS

BY

M. OSTON, M.D.

EDINBURGH:

JOHN CURRIE, 16 TEVIOT PLACE

TO
MY FELLOW-GRADUATES
OF
EDINBURGH UNIVERSITY

AUTHOR'S PREFACE

NOTHING interests doctors more than patients,—and the queerer the patients, the more interesting the case. Few people interest patients more than their doctors,—except, perhaps, other patients! Most of us are, or have been, doctors or patients; some of us have been both. There is, therefore, some ground for hope that the following pages, which depict some of the more unusual phases of the relationship between doctor and patient, may have an interest for not a few.

My aim has been to pass a pleasant hour or two with my fellow-graduates by telling them of some of the more unusual incidents which have come my way, and possibly there may be a hint here and there which may be of service to themselves. Neither would it do patients any harm to try and realise, a little more fully, the difficulties which daily enter into the life of the modern physician. If both are interested,—then I am more than satisfied.

M. OSTON.

PUBLISHER'S NOTE

IT need hardly be said that the characters as drawn in the following pages are those of "types" of queer patients which the medical man may encounter on sea or land, and in no case are they individuals. The things told have occurred, but not to the people depicted, nor in the circumstances as set forth here. In those respects the book is medical fiction.

CONTENTS

	PAGE
I. A MERE DETAIL	I
II. THE MILLIONAIRE	14
III. LADY RUNNEL'S NECKLACE	41
IV. MR PHOGG'S IDEA	78
V. GRATEFUL AND OTHERWISE	95
VI. TWO EXTREMES—THE BEGINNING	115
VII. „ „ —THE END	132
VIII. A CURIOUS COMMISSION	153
IX. TWO LUNATICS AT HOME	170
X. MORE LUNATICS	205
XI. A PATHETIC DOCUMENT	219
XII. A ROMANY LASS	249
XIII. THE LETTER "D"	263
XIV. THE GHOST OF THE <i>ALEXANDRIA</i>	303
XV. "NICE BOY".	319

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Hand in hand we promenaded (<i>see</i> p. 321)	. <i>Frontispiece</i>
'I wish to goodness you would' <i>See page</i> 10
Counted my coins twice	„ 36
I was suddenly startled by coming in contact with something that was hard and gritty	„ 64
Touched him on the shoulder	„ 91
Each of whom was trying to enter first	„ 97
'D'yer see anything wrong on my back?'	„ 108
'Scotland, Sir!'	„ 130
Solemnly cross out one date	„ 145
He was reading the contents	„ 163
'Good Lord, Sir, they are both dead'	„ 200
'I will brain you'	„ 210
In the caravan	„ 257
'I hate you'	„ 270
A thin, wrinkled brown hand stole gently over the edge of the skylight	„ 313

QUEER PATIENTS.

I

A MERE DETAIL

THE following case, exemplifying as it does, the great importance of some matters of domestic arrangements which usually escape attention from the point of view of the family physician, is one of the most interesting, to my mind, of a group of similar cases which have come under my notice from time to time.

One day I received a letter from a gentleman, who was a well-known solicitor in my district, asking me for an interview for the following morning. He was not a patient of mine, and I had never met him personally, though I knew him quite well by repute. When shown into my consulting-room, I observed at once that he was labouring under

considerable mental distress, and was evidently rather dreading his interview. He spoke about various matters for a few minutes, and was obviously disinclined, or found it difficult, to enter upon the special object of his visit. I did my best to put him at his ease, and finally he broached the topic upon which he wished to consult me.

"I'm afraid you will laugh at me, Doctor, when you hear what I have to say," he began.

"I assure you, I shall do no such thing," I replied. "I hope I have learned by this time that many things are of serious importance to one's patients which may, at first sight, appear trifling."

"Well!" he said, "I had better tell you, as well as I can, what it is that is troubling me. Three years ago, I was married to the lady, who is now my wife, and whom, I think, you do not know. It was a love match on both sides, and we were passionately devoted to each other. We have lived in extreme happiness until about three months ago, when for some reason, the nature of which I have no idea, my wife's attitude seemed to me to become entirely different. She is of a highly-

strung nature, very sensitive, but, at the same time, has always been of a happy disposition, and, until recently, I have never known her to be irritable. Now-a-days, however, the least thing seems to upset her, and she flies out into abominable fits of temper, particularly in my presence, but also in the presence of the servants, and, I am sorry to say, even if visitors are in the room. The strange part of it is that there is never any reason for these outbursts. One moment she will be her usual charming, good-tempered self, and the next moment everybody is placed in a most awkward position as the result of some senseless display of temper. At these times she seems to have lost all affection for me and for our little child, should the latter be in the room at the time. An hour afterwards, she is once more herself. I don't know what on earth to make of it. I have talked to her with all the tact I could about it, and she, though admitting the facts, cannot throw any light upon it herself, but simply says that on these occasions she loses all control of her words and actions. I have come to you to know if you can offer me any advice and help. May I say at once that I

will gladly give you any fee you care to name within my means, if you can solve this problem satisfactorily."

"Will you answer any question I choose to put to you?" I said.

"Certainly," he replied.

"First, then," I continued, "why have you come to me instead of to your own family physician?"

"Well!" answered my patient, "simply because our own doctor has been present on several occasions when these outbursts have taken place, and has spoken to me afterwards about them in a way which shows that he is simply of opinion that my wife's character is changing for the worse, which obviously implies that he does not consider the case as one for a physician at all—at any rate, as one in which he can assist."

"Next, can you tell me anything which happened about the time—three months ago, I think you said—when you first noticed this alteration in your wife's behaviour?"

"No!" he answered. "I have tried often to think of anything in our lives at that period which could have any bearing upon the case."

"Ah! that is the very point," I said. "Something may have happened, and, indeed, must have happened, which to your mind can have no bearing upon the case, but which, if we can discover it, just as obviously has the greatest possible bearing upon it."

"I cannot think of anything definite to tell you," he said, "and believe me, I am keeping nothing back."

After some further questions concerning his wife's friends, and her relationship to various people, from which I elicited no light upon the subject, I came to the conclusion that the only way to get at the fact I wanted, whatever it was, was to try another line of investigation. I, therefore, said to my patient, or rather to my patient's husband, that I should be much obliged if he would allow me to leave him for half an hour, during which time he was to write me down a detailed account of the last six months of his married life, inserting every little event of which he could think, quite irrespective of whether he deemed it of importance or not. I suggested that he should imagine he were writing to a brother abroad and giving him an account of his own family

history during that time. This he at once agreed to do, and having provided him with the necessary materials, I left the room.

While I was absent, I thought over what facts he had already given me, and was pretty well convinced that this was one of those curious mental cases, the relief of which entirely depended upon being able to put one's finger upon some definite irritating condition or agent. I knew, however, from previous experience, how difficult it was to get at this condition.

At the end of half an hour, I returned and found him just finishing his account. I told him that I would like to read this over in the light of his previous remarks, and after having considered the whole matter, I would write to him. I then wished him good-morning.

Then I turned my attention to his document, and, reading it through very carefully, discovered that the only new fact was, that three months ago, they had moved into a new residence. The clue evidently was here, if anywhere, in the evidence before me. I, therefore penned a note to him at his club, in which I asked him if he could arrange to invite me to luncheon on such a day as would ensure my

meeting his wife in an ordinary social manner. He replied, by return, to the effect that this could be easily managed, and a post or two later I got an ordinary invitation to lunch with him on the following Tuesday at 1.30.

On the day in question, I presented myself at his house some twenty minutes before the hour of luncheon; my object being, if possible, to secure a few minutes' conversation with the lady herself, before her husband came in. In this, I was fortunately successful. The maid showed me into a small boudoir, where I was most graciously received by my unconscious patient—unconscious, I mean, that she was a patient. I innocently apologised for being early, and she told me that she expected her husband in every moment. I found her a most charming woman, without any trace of nervous agitation, or anything to indicate mental irritation. A few careful questions, diplomatically put, convinced me that she was a clever, educated, and apparently quite normal woman of the world. While we were talking, her husband arrived, and a few moments later the luncheon gong sounded.

We proceeded downstairs into a large

dining-room, and, the moment we entered it, I observed a complete change come over my patient's attitude. Naturally, I was watching her as closely as I could, without being detected in so doing. Nothing in the room seemed to please her; it was too cold, or too dark, and the flowers on the table were not those she had ordered. The unfortunate servant who waited was told that the soup was spoilt, and from this, she went on finding fault with everything and everybody in a very curious way. Altogether, the meal was a most uncomfortable one, and I was immensely relieved when it came to an end, and she rose to withdraw. I opened the door for her, and she went out without a word, almost rudely. I closed the door after her, and resumed my seat.

Her husband handed me a cigar. "There you are," he remarked, "that is exactly what I told you. What on earth do you make of that?"

I evaded any direct reply, because a certain look of coming relief on her face as she left the room gave me an idea. It was, however, in the nature of a very long shot, and I wanted

a little time to consider before I risked it. I, therefore, talked round the question for a few minutes, and then pulling out my watch, suddenly remembered an urgent appointment.

"I shall write to you to-morrow," I said, "when, perhaps, I may have news for you."

I shook hands with my host, and left him with a somewhat blank expression on his face, evidently thinking that I could make nothing of it.

On returning home, I pondered carefully over the idea which had entered my mind, and compared it mentally with something of a similar nature which had happened in my experience before. The more I thought of it, the more sure I felt that I knew what was the matter, and, before long, I had made up my mind to risk my diagnosis and treatment. I sat down and wrote the following letter to the husband:—

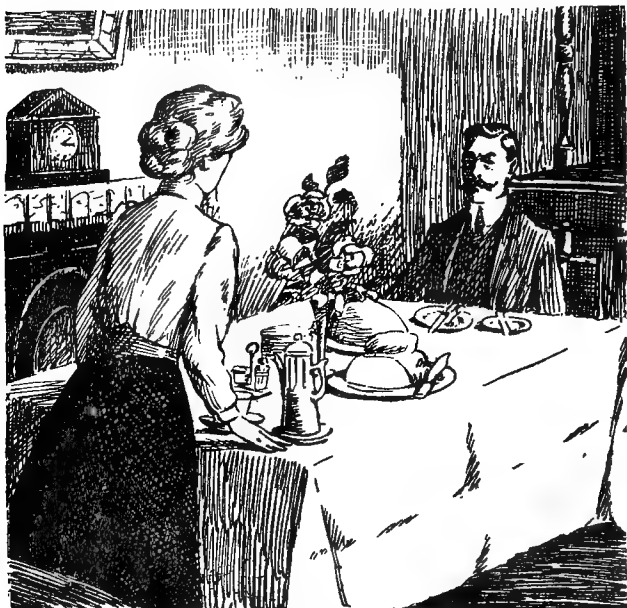
"DEAR MR B.,—I strongly advise you to have your dining-room re-papered. Choose a soothing tone, preferably greenish.—Yours faithfully,
M. OSTON."

This I posted in due course.

I heard nothing more about the case for

six weeks, when, one morning, I received a letter from the husband which ran as follows :—

“MY DEAR DOCTOR,—I am writing to tell you that everything is turning out well, though



‘I WISH TO GOODNESS YOU WOULD.’

how on earth you arrived at your conclusion, I have not the remotest idea. It is due to you, however, to tell you what happened on receipt of your brief prescription. I may say frankly that your letter annoyed me immensely.

I thought you were trifling with me. However, as you apparently meant it seriously, I suddenly announced to my wife next day, when at luncheon in the dining-room, what I intended to do.

‘I think I shall have this room re-papered,’ I said.

To my utter astonishment, my wife almost jumped out of her chair. ‘I wish to goodness you would,’ she exclaimed, ‘I simply hate being in this room; its colour drives me mad.’

I said no more about it, but made arrangements at once with the trades-people. We went abroad for three weeks while the room was being re-decorated. Immediately we got away, she became her usual sweet self, and never during our whole holiday showed any trace of her curious irritability. When we came home a week ago, to my intense relief, she remained herself, and, on the first occasion on which we sat down in the dining-room, although she made no remark, I noticed that she heaved a deep sigh of relief. I cannot say any more, except thank you, and trust you will accept the enclosed cheque as a slight^a appreciation of a gratitude that is greater than I can express.—Believe me,
Yours sincerely, ———.”

So my long shot had come off! If you want to know what made me think of it, I will tell you.

I remembered that, some years before, my little girl used to come home from her weekly music lesson in very much the same curious frame of mind. As she seemed to me to be of a similar temperament, the two cases struck me as probably having something in common. In the case of my own child, I had taken great pains to ascertain what it was that so upset her at her music, a subject of which she was extremely fond, and one day, when she seemed particularly put out, I pressed her very closely. "Well! I can't stand that teacher's beastly blouse!" she blurted out, much to my astonishment.

"Why," I said, "what's the matter with it?"

"Oh!" she replied, "it's the most awful colour you ever set eyes on."

"What colour is it?" I asked.

"It's red," she said, "but it's not an ordinary red. I think it must be the same kind of red as the red rag which makes a bull mad. Anyhow, that's how it makes me feel."

After a careful consultation with my wife, we decided that there were difficulties in the way of requesting the music teacher to remove her blouse, and so we chose the simpler method

of removing the pupil. But the instance taught me, once for all, the extreme susceptibility of certain natures and temperaments to the influence of colour perception, and I have seen many cases since of a similar kind, though none of them, perhaps, quite so marked as the one described above.

How little we know of the actual elements in our surroundings which are responsible for our sensations! This much, at any rate, is certain—that of these elements, colours are not the least important.

II

THE MILLIONAIRE

THE queerness of patients is not always due to the obscurity of their physical conditions, nor to the complexity of their symptoms. Just as often as not, the more interesting phases of human nature which present themselves to the doctor are due to the characters and individualities of the people concerned. In fact to many of us, it is the study of the psychology of the human mind that is the most interesting thing of all.

That wonderful old physician, Dr Wendell Holmes, says somewhere or other in a discussion of the differences of the three learned professions, that the lawyer sees the worst side of people, the clergyman the best side, but the doctor sees them as they are. This statement is profoundly true, and it is questionable whether either the office of the lawyer, or the study of the clergyman is so frequently the place of true

confession as is the consulting-room of the physician.

As a rule, it is only one side of the case that the lawyer or the parson sees, but people know very well that it would be too dangerous a matter to place a one-sided case before a physician. Hence, in many cases, they tell the whole truth, which they would not do to any one else.

But apart from this, private characteristics and idiosyncrasies come before the doctor in an extremely marked manner, even when they are suppressed by their owners in the ordinary dealings of life.

I was led to these reflections by the recollection of a curious old patient I had in a country practice, in whom the habits of a lifetime used to crop up and assert themselves in an extraordinary way—habits and features which were quite unsuspected by many who knew him, but which he was never able to mask when dealing with me.

Mr Harpur Hey was a reputed millionaire, having made a colossal fortune out of wool or pork, I forget which, in his early life. Having done so, he proceeded to buy a magnificent

estate in my district, together with an ancestral house thereon and the splendid shootings attached to it. His idea (quite a common one with people of that type) was that by doing so he would become a recognised English county gentleman in about ten days.

When I went to the district in question he was an old man of some eighty-four or five years of age, and the tenantry on his estate comprised a very large and important proportion of the patients in the practice. They consisted of well-to-do farmers, their farmhands and labourers with their families, together with the usual sprinkling of gamekeepers and other people one usually finds on a large county estate.

I was given to understand that Mr Harpur Hey posed somewhat as a philanthropist to those around him, but it was not very long before I discovered that, like a good many other people, he liked to obtain his reputation for philanthropy as far as possible at someone else's expense. I had not been there very long before I received a letter from him in the following terms:—

“DEAR SIR,—I understand that you have

purchased the medical practice of this district. As I am extremely interested in all that pertains to the welfare of my tenants on this estate, I should be glad if you would give me an interview at which we might discuss, and, if possible, arrange the terms upon which you would consent to act as medical attendant to my tenants. I also should like to speak to you concerning attendance on myself.

“If you would lunch with me on Monday at 1-30, you will oblige.—Yours faithfully,

HARPUR HEY.”

I read this epistle with considerable interest, because it seemed to me an eminently sensible proposal, provided that it was carried out in a reasonable spirit, and on a decent financial footing. If Mr Harpur Hey chose to pay me an annual salary for attending to his tenants, I felt inclined to meet him half-way.

I ought, perhaps, to explain that the practice was an entirely unopposed one, and that the tenants would be compelled to employ me as their doctor whether they wished it or not, there being no other medical man nearer than twelve miles in one direction and fourteen in another. I accordingly replied that I should be glad to accept the invitation to lunch, and to discuss the matter mentioned in his letter.

In the interval, I discovered that no such arrangement had been in existence in the time of my predecessor, who had recently died, nor did I find the old gentleman's name in the list of patients, though most of his tenants' appeared there at intervals.

On the Monday, I drove up to Mr Hey's beautiful old house, and was welcomed by the old gentleman in the library, where I found him nibbling a biscuit and sipping a glass of sherry.

He came to the point at once.

"Good-morning, Dr. Oston," he began. "I am very glad you have the sense to come and see me, and I hope now that you are here, you will be rather more reasonable than your hot-headed fool of a predecessor. I am a business man, sir, a plain straightforward business man. I made my own fortune, and made it quickly, and I did it by taking every opportunity that came to hand, and by hard work."

I congratulated him upon his success.

"When your predecessor took this practice," he continued, "I made him the same, or a similar, offer to that which I am now about to make to you ; but instead of accepting it, what do you think he did, sir ?"

"I am sure I have no idea," I replied.

"He told me to go to the devil, sir. Me! Harpur Hey!"

"Indeed!" I said, "and what did you say?"

"Say, sir! What could I say? I told him, as I have told you, that he was a hot-headed fool, and that he would never enter my house again, and he never did, except twice, and then I was in such infernal pain that I had no time to wait until I could get anyone else. He charged me five guineas each visit!"

"Well, Mr Hey," I said, "I trust we shall have a more amicable experience. Perhaps you will tell me, in general terms, the kind of proposal that you would like me to consider."

At that moment, lunch was announced, and we sat down together to a very substantial repast.

"I suppose you understand, Dr Oston," Mr Hey continued, "that it is quite hopeless for you to expect to succeed in this district without my support?"

"I can quite understand," I replied, "that it would be a great advantage to be the medical adviser of yourself, and of those who are influenced by you."

"Quite so! quite so!" he said. "That's exactly what I could not get your predecessor to understand. Well, now, I have some ninety or a hundred families among my tenantry, well-to-do farmers many of them, and it would be a great satisfaction to know that they were certain at all times of being able to call upon your services when required."

"They can, of course, do that," I said. "That is why I have bought the practice. They may call upon me as often as they like; the oftener the better as far as I am concerned."

"Yes! yes! I know all about that, but that's not exactly what I mean. You country practitioners are very anxious to attend to your patients for a year or two, until you fancy you are pretty well established, but after that you are apt to get infernally independent, if not absolutely lazy, and to please yourselves whether you go or not when sent for, and to whom you go and to whom you don't go. I, therefore, wish to propose an arrangement to you which will secure that my tenants are properly looked after medically, and will, at the same time, secure you from any opposition."

I was beginning to feel a little uneasy at the

tone of my host's remarks. They gave me the impression that he was entering upon the somewhat congenial task, to him, of driving a bargain, and I began to have a shrewd suspicion that when his proposal was made, it would be found to be somewhat less generous than I had previously imagined. However, I was determined to let the old gentleman have his full say, and, if possible, to leave him, at any rate, on amicable terms.

"Now, what do you consider a fair fee," he enquired, "for attendance upon a farmer on my estate? How much would you charge him for a visit with medicine?"

"It would all depend," I replied, "upon several things. First, the position of the farmer financially, which I should have to estimate by the size of his farm; second, the distance from my house to his; third, the nature of the attendance which I had to give when I got there; and fourth, whether the visit were in the daytime, or during the night."

"You see, Mr Hey," I continued, "that some of your farms are about three miles from my house, while those on the other side

of the estate are six or seven, and others are between that."

"Humph!" grunted Mr Hey. "Can't you strike an average?"

"No," I replied. "I don't think that would be fair either to them or to me. It would mean that in some cases the patient would think he were overcharged, while in other cases, I should feel I was underpaid. However, what do you propose yourself? I am quite willing to consider any proposal you put forward."

"I think you would be quite well paid on an average," he said, "if you charged three shillings and sixpence a visit."

"Including medicine?" I enquired.

"Of course," he answered. "Medicine costs nothing."

"And including night visits?" I persisted.

"Yes, certainly! People don't call you out at night here, unless they have to."

"I am afraid, Mr Hey," I replied, "that I can hardly pledge myself to accept the figure you mention. I understand that the usual fee in the practice is five shillings per visit to those farms situated within a three miles radius of my house, and one shilling a mile additional

after that. The night fee is, of course, double."

"Yes! quite so," he replied, "but then you must remember that those fees charged by your predecessor resulted in his contracting a good many bad debts."

(As a matter of fact, I knew that my predecessor had contracted very few bad debts, which was one of the reasons for my purchasing the practice. Moreover, I was quite certain that Mr Hey could have no actual knowledge of that subject, and his statement, therefore, was simply a piece of bluff on his part.)

"Well, Mr Hey," I replied, "I don't think that we are likely to gain very much by a protracted discussion on the matter. I think the only thing to be done is to put before me a definite concrete offer, which I promise you I will endeavour to accept, or decline, entirely upon its merits."

"Quite so! quite so!" replied Mr Hey. "That's the most business-like thing you have said yet. As a matter of fact, I have already drawn out a statement of what I would propose to you, and I have it here." So saying, he pulled out of his pocket a sheet of foolscap

paper, and handed it over to me. It read as follows :—

“I, Dr Oston, hereby undertake and agree to attend all the farm tenants, their families, and employees upon the estate of Harpur Hey Esq., for the uniform fee of three shillings and sixpence a visit, including medicine, irrespective of distance or hour.”

There was a blank space at the bottom of it, in which apparently Mr Harpur Hey had permitted himself to anticipate that he might see my signature.

Of course, I had only to read the thing through to see that this was a piece of gross impertinence and utterly absurd, and it simply became a matter of how I could decline it without giving the old gentleman offence.

I made a hasty calculation, and came to the conclusion that on an average, this agreement would bring me in about £150 a year, in place of rather more than double that sum which annually stood on my practice books as coming from Mr Hey's tenants.

“As far as I can see, Mr Hey,” I answered, “if I were to sign this agreement, it would mean my attending all your people for a salary

of about £150 a year, and even if you were to give me that, I am afraid I could hardly regard it as a satisfactory remuneration."

"If I were to give you what?" he asked.

"A hundred and fifty a year," I replied, "or thereabouts."

"Who on earth said I was going to give you anything?" he continued.

"I don't understand," I replied. "I thought you were making me an offer to attend your tenantry."

"Nothing of the sort! I never made you an offer of any kind. Never thought of doing so. Haven't said anything which could possibly lead you to think so. I merely suggested that you should attend my tenantry for the figure stated. Am I to understand that you decline?"

"Do you really mean to say," I replied, "that you are endeavouring to get me to commit myself to this arrangement, and, at the same time, that you are not guaranteeing the payment of even the small fees mentioned?"

"Most certainly, I am not," he answered. "Why should I pay my tenants' doctor's bills? They are quite well enough off to do that for themselves."

"I have no doubt they are," I replied, "but in that case, I entirely fail to understand the object of this conversation."

"I am merely endeavouring to do my duty to my tenantry," said the old gentleman.

"I see," I replied, "at my expense, evidently. Well, Mr Harpur Hey, I think we need not pursue the subject further. I must, with all due respect to your extraordinary philanthropy, decline to sign that paper."

Mr Harpur Hey muttered something under his breath, folded the paper up, and put it in his pocket. After a moment's silence, he broke out on a fresh subject.

"Well, if you won't, I suppose you won't! I suppose you have no objection to attending me?"

"None whatever," I replied. "On the contrary, I shall be delighted to come whenever you send for me, though I trust you will long be spared to enjoy the vigorous health in which you evidently are at present."

"Quite so! Yes, I have no doubt you would come," replied the old man, "but what I want to know is—what will you charge me for coming?"

Now, here I thought I had Mr Harpur Hey in a somewhat awkward position if I chose to force his hand. His house was four miles from mine, one mile of which was a private drive up from the main road. There was no other doctor nearer than seven miles from him, so that it was hardly likely—at least so I thought then—that there could be any medical man sufficiently near to attend him for a less fee than I should charge, even if there were one mean enough to do so. I had, however, no desire to do anything but what was perfectly fair.

“I think, Mr Hey, one guinea per visit would be the usual thing under the circumstances,” I replied.

“Guinea be hanged!” he replied. “There’s no such thing as a guinea.”

“Well, then, if you prefer it,” I replied, “shall we say twenty-one shillings?”

“Preposterous price for an ordinary visit! How on earth do you expect people to live? I tell you, sir, I will pay you no such thing. I have lived eighty-three years in the world, and I have never paid a doctor more than seven shillings and sixpence a visit yet, except

to that scoundrel of a predecessor of yours, who took advantage of my sudden illness, charged me five guineas a visit, and sued me for it in the County Court in six weeks, after rendering his account every day for three weeks previously. Disgrace to his profession, sir !”

I thought myself that he was rather a credit to it, but I doubted whether he were built upon the same plan as myself, I being a rather more peaceful man. However, I certainly was not going to attend Mr Hey for seven shillings and sixpence a visit, unless I happened to be passing his gate at that time, and I told him so.

He obstinately refused to pay any more, and gave me very clearly to understand that he would seek for medical advice elsewhere.

“Do you know sir, that if you drive me to it, I shall engage the services of a medical man exclusively for myself and my tenants, and then where will your practice be ?” This was his parting shot on this subject.

“I think, Mr Hey, that you would find on the whole that it would be very much cheaper to pay me a guinea a visit,” I replied simply.

“What about attending my servants ?” he next ejaculated.

Now I had not the slightest intention of putting myself in the position of medical attendant to the servants, unless I were also medical attendant to the master. In some practices there would be no drawback in so doing, but in a district such as this was, it would have done me harm. However, I had no doubt that the old gentleman would employ me when he wanted me, and I, therefore, had no objection to agreeing to attend the servants in the house at seven shillings and sixpence a visit.

This was the sole point upon which we agreed that morning, and I left Mr Harpur Hey, having concluded nothing else but this one agreement, and that only a verbal one, to attend his servants for the fee stated.

The interest of this case is, as I said at the beginning, not scientific, but psychological. Not many years afterwards, when Mr Harpur Hey departed this life, I observed that his will was proved at something over a million and a quarter, and that he left ten shillings to his butler. The curious thing was that here was a man of this immense wealth who would expend endless energy and argument in endeavouring to drive a bargain with a poor

country doctor, by means of which bargain he himself gained nothing except the satisfaction of having done the doctor out of a portion of his just income. Moreover, he ran no risk. He had no intention of paying the fees for his tenants, nor of guaranteeing their payment, but simply wished to beat me down in my fees for other people, and then to take the credit of having provided them with a cheap doctor.

Had I realised at first, of course, that his proposal was to take this form, I should never have consented to the interview at all. I only concluded that if we came to an agreement, he would either pay or make himself responsible for the payment of the amount. The colossal impudence of simply attempting to get my services at half-price, and even then without paying for them, was so sublime that it never occurred to me.

A queer character indeed was old Harpur Hey. Before I leave him entirely, I may here mention one or two other little incidents connected with him which will further illustrate how the habit of money-making, and the intense desire to get the better of someone

else in a bargain, was the moving spirit of his life even in old age.

A year or two after my first interview with him, I was driving past the house along his private road on my return from a visit to one of his gardeners, who lived in a cottage close by. My coachman drew my attention to "Old Jimmie's" near hind shoe which was evidently loose, and suggested that we should stop at Mr Harpur Hey's smithy and get it nailed on firmly. Mr Hey kept a fine blacksmith's shop at the back of his stables, where he did all his own shoeing for all the horses on his estate.

I agreed at once, and we drove round to the smith's. I asked him if he would be kind enough to fix the shoe for me. This he did in a few minutes, and after thanking him and asking him to be sure and inform Mr Harpur Hey that I had called with this request, and to convey my thanks to Mr Hey, we drove on.

Three months later, on the quarter-day, I received a bill, written on a half-sheet of notepaper, from my friend the millionaire. It was written as follows:—

Dr Oston.

To HARPUR HEY Esq.

Dec. 27, 189—.

To fixing on one near hind shoe..... 1s. 4d.

Kindly settle this at once.

I read this several times before it conveyed anything to my mind at all, and only after a few moments did I recollect the incident mentioned. My first thought then was that either somebody was trying to hoax me, or else that the blacksmith himself thought that the shilling tip he had received on the spot was insufficient payment for the work done. The actual truth, namely that Mr Harpur Hey had rendered me an account for fixing the shoe, never dawned upon me for a moment.

A day or two later, however, I was again passing the house, and met the old gentleman by his door. I stopped to have a word or two with him, and he invited me to come in for a glass of wine. I accepted his invitation, and we sat down for a few moments in the library. I was then enlightened as to the motive for asking me in.

"By the way, Doctor," he began, "I may as well settle that bill of yours for the housemaid. Where the dickens is it! Ah! Yes! here it is. Fifteen shillings—two visits. Humph!"

He paused, evidently rather expecting me to make some comment.

However, I remained silent.

"Now, Doctor, you know I think fourteen shillings and sixpence is quite enough for two visits to the housemaid. I think you have charged a little too much on this occasion."

"My dear Mr Hey," I replied, "I thought that we had agreed that my fee to the servants was to be seven shillings and sixpence a visit? I have merely rendered the account according to the terms amicably settled."

"Yes! Yes! I believe we did say something about that, but I am bound to say I think fifteen shillings is too much. I think that fourteen shillings and sixpence or even fourteen shillings would recompense you amply. I hate to see young men so grasping."

"Will you please kindly settle the amount for whatever sum that seems fit to you. If you will pass me the bill, I shall receipt it.

am not a rich man, but, thank heaven, I

have never yet argued with a patient on a question of sixpence, and I don't propose to begin now." So saying, I took the bill and signed my name at the bottom.

Mr Harpur Hey slowly counted out fourteen shillings, and having done so, counted it again, in case he had made a mistake. This sum he solemnly passed over to me. "Too much altogether—fifteen shillings for two visits—housemaid—nothing the matter with the girl—absurd!" he muttered as he passed me the money.

Then the bill for "Jimmie's" shoe came into my mind, and I thought that I would see how far this extraordinary mental phase really gripped the old man.

"Oh, by the way, Mr Hey, is this from you?" I said, taking his account out of my pocket and handing it over to him.

The old man looked at it. "To fixing on one near hind shoe, one shilling and fourpence, December 27th," he read aloud.

"Yes, certainly, I remember the incident perfectly. The smith told me himself a few minutes after you had gone. Do you mean to deny it, sir?"

"Oh, certainly not!" I said. "I remember it perfectly myself. In fact, I sent a message of courteous thanks to you, telling you that I had taken the liberty of asking your smith to do this."

"Well, sir, he did it, and did it well. Cheap at the price too. Look what would have happened! No smith nearer your village than three miles, bad road, horse casts a shoe before it gets home, goes dead lame, laid up for three weeks, and so on, and then you grudge me one shilling and fourpence, for fixing it on. The meanness of some people is past putting up with!"

"You quite misunderstand me, Mr Hey," I replied. "I neither wish to dispute the occasion nor the price. In fact, I think that it was ridiculously little for the service rendered. I think myself that it should have been at least one shilling and sixpence, and, with your permission, I shall pay you that amount now, if you will be kind enough to receipt the bill." I counted out one shilling, a threepenny piece, two coppers and a couple of half-pennies, and solemnly passed them to Harpur Hey, Esq., millionaire. He signed his bill, gave it me

back, counted my coins twice, and put them in his pocket.

My only regret was that I had not thirty-six half-pennies to offer him.



COUNTED MY COINS TWICE.

This little ceremony over, I rose to take my departure, and as I did so, he rang the bell. The butler appeared.

“Be so good, Jonson,” said Mr Hey, “as to place a brace of pheasants in the doctor’s trap, and just put in a bunch of grapes for Mrs Ostøen.”

With these, he sent me away, and this is the curious thing. This old man would spend no end of time and mental energy in knocking a sixpence off a bill which he had to pay, or would be delighted to accept the extra twopence from someone who had to pay him, and having gained his point, which was not worth gaining, would proceed to extend to one a hospitality or generosity which, valued financially, was out of all proportion to the gain he had made.

I suppose that to rear that brace of pheasants, and to grow the bunch of grapes which accompanied them, would cost Mr Harpur Hey at least one pound; but he had the delight of doing the doctor out of sixpence to compensate for it.

One last incident to show how even millionaires and thrifty business men sometimes overreach themselves. I flatly declined to attend Mr Harpur Hey for less than a guinea a visit, and he, true to his word, never employed me

for himself, and in course of time I learned that he was attended now and then by a doctor from the town ten miles away. I could not bring myself to believe that this practitioner was going to Mr Hey's house and back again, for less than the fee I had asked, and I wondered how on earth he had managed to get the old gentleman to pay him a satisfactory figure. This was explained to me by the millionaire himself one day, and he seemed to think that he had a real grievance against me in the matter.

"Very stupid of you, you know, Oston. Extremely stupid not to accept my offer of fees. Just means bringing another doctor into the district, you know; result is that Dr. —— attends me for ten shillings and sixpence."

"You don't mean to say," I replied, "that Dr —— comes all the way here, and goes all the way back for that fee, including medicine?"

"Certainly, he does," he said.

I paused a moment, wondering to myself how on earth the worthy doctor could find time to amuse himself in this way, and then an

idea struck me; one where indeed it might possibly be managed at a profit, though certainly not very honourably.

"How often does Dr —— render his accounts, may I ask, Mr Hey?" I said.

"How on earth should I know?" he replied.

"Well," I said, "how often has he rendered yours?"

"Never has rendered one yet, why should he? He knows his money's perfectly safe."

"I see!" I answered, "and how long is it since you first called him in?"

"Oh! I think it must be a matter of eighteen months ago, or something of that kind," he said. "You know it's entirely your own fault. I'd rather have you! I believe you've more brains than he has—except for business. But there you are, you can't say I did not make you an offer."

"Oh, no," I replied. "I remember the offer quite well. I can only congratulate you upon finding a satisfactory medical attendant who will fall in with your views."

Later I discovered how Dr —— made it pay. Harpur Hey, millionaire, died two years later, and up to the time of his death,

Dr ——— had never rendered an account. The executors of Harpur Hey Esq., however, had to pay one which was not calculated precisely on the basis that Mr Hey mentioned to me.

III

LADY RUNNEL'S NECKLACE.

I HAVE never yet been able to make up my mind what class of medical work brings one the most curious experiences, but of this I am quite certain, that country practice in a good sporting district offers as much variety as most other spheres. It was my fate to practice in such a district at one time, and amongst the most out-of-the-way experiences that I had in that district, the following deserves a place.

One winter afternoon, I was returning home on foot across some fields. I had been seeing a patient in one of the cottages on the estate of the local squire, Sir Joseph Runnel. Emerging from the field on the road, I almost immediately encountered the village constable, Williams by name, rather a crony of my own. I suppose Williams and I, both individually and collectively, knew

more about the inner history of that district than all the vicars and their parishioners put together. I used to come across Williams at all hours of the day and night, and frequently gave him a lift in my dog-cart, which saved him some miles of tramping. It was not much in the way of crime that came under his notice. He was chiefly concerned with stray cattle and dogs, or vehicles without lights, and occasionally a minor poaching affray. Constable Williams — Sergeant, he was called in the village—was a jovial good-tempered fellow, who always patched up a petty quarrel, if he could, rather than make a case of it.

On this occasion, I noticed at once that he was not wearing his usual placid smile. In fact, in place of his cheery manner, he was ponderously serious.

“Good evening, Williams,” I said as he saluted me, “all well at home, I hope?”

“Quite well, thank you, sir,” he replied, “we’re all right.”

“I’m glad to hear that, because you look as if you had lost a thousand pounds, or had some catastrophe on your mind.”

"Well, sir!" he replied, "you're not far out. There's trouble at the Hall!" he continued, lowering his voice.

"Indeed," I said. "What's the matter? I've heard nothing about it. I saw Sir Joseph this morning. Nothing serious, I hope?"

"Well, I don't know," said Williams, scratching his chin. "I'm rather inclined to think it'll turn out very serious, from what I've heard."

I knew I had only to wait a moment for the constable to tell me all he knew. He usually unburdened his mind pretty freely to me without any trouble. So it was in this case.

"If you're not too busy this evening, sir," he went on, "I'd like a few words with you in the surgery. I can't stop just now, as I have got to get to the telegraph office."

The nearest telegraph office was three miles distant, which meant that it would be nearly two hours before Williams was back.

"Certainly!" I said. "I'll be very pleased to hear what you have to say if I can be of any assistance. Come in about six o'clock. I shall be there then."

"Thank you, sir, I will," he replied, striding off in the direction of the telegraph office.

I met several of the villagers before I reached my house, and, though I had a word or two with them, none of them mentioned anything unusual having occurred up at the Squire's, so that I concluded whatever it was, the news had not got round as yet.

A few minutes to six and Williams arrived, looking more worried than ever. I put him into a chair by the fire. "Now, Williams," I said, "let's hear all about it."

"I'll just tell you the whole thing, sir, from the beginning," he said, taking out his notebook, and standing straight up as though he were giving evidence in the police court. "Perhaps if I tell you what I know, it may help to make it clearer to myself."

"Go ahead," I said, "I'm all attention."

"At eleven-thirty A.M. this morning," he began, "I received an urgent message from the groom at the Hall. It was from her ladyship, saying she wished me to come there at once. I started immediately, and arrived at the Hall at twelve noon. Her ladyship saw me in the gun-room. She gave

me the following information. She stated that on the previous evening—that is, last night—she had gone to her dressing-room, as usual, to dress for dinner, and had selected certain articles of jewelry to wear that evening. Amongst those chosen was a small pearl necklace which was taken out of its case and laid upon her dressing-table. She then rang the bell for her maid, and left the room for a few minutes. She is not exactly sure how long she was absent, but estimates the time at possibly two to three minutes. When she returned to her dressing-room the maid was ready for her, and she proceeded to dress; but when she came to put on her jewelry she could not find her pearl necklace, although the case was open and empty as she left it. Her ladyship asked the maid if she had noticed the necklace, but she denied having seen it at all, and reminded her ladyship that she had not been present when she had taken the necklace out of its case. I was further informed that the maid has strict orders never on any account to touch any jewelry, and that her ladyship invariably puts it away herself, and brings it out herself.

“The maid, apparently thinking that her ladyship suspected her of stealing it, requested that she should search her there and then. This her ladyship was most unwilling to do, saying that she had no such suspicions at all, but had simply thought that the girl might have taken it up and put it down somewhere else carelessly. At her own earnest request, however, her ladyship did search the maid, but nothing was found. Both of them then looked everywhere in the room without discovering any trace of the missing article. Her ladyship, thinking that it was one of those common occurrences of misplaced objects, took no further notice at the time, and went down to dinner. This morning, however, she caused a thorough search to be made of the dressing-room, as well as of the room into which she had gone during her few minutes’ absence; but in spite of every effort and enquiry there was no result. The necklace was missing.”

“When did Sir Joseph hear of this?” I asked.

“Only this afternoon on his return home. He had been away for the night, as he was shooting with the Colonel, and he would be

on his way back when you met him this morning."

"I see," I said. "Well, I shall probably hear of it from him to-morrow, as I am invited for the shoot at the Hall."

As it turned out, I was destined to hear of the matter before to-morrow, but more of that anon.

"Well, what did you do," I said, "on receiving this information from her ladyship?"

"What could I do?" replied the constable. "The only thing I could think of was to wait until Sir Joseph returned, and take his instructions, especially as he himself is Chairman of the Bench. I could take no steps; there was no evidence against anyone. The necklace has been mislaid, I suppose. Anyhow, her ladyship is in a terrible state about it, and Sir Joseph threatens all sorts of things. It seems that the thing was a present from some Indian Prince who knew Sir Joseph, and, although quite small, it is of great value. When I met you this afternoon, I was on my way to telegraph for a detective from London, as nothing else would satisfy Sir Joseph but that step. They both seem to think it's been

stolen, but neither of them suspect anybody; and least of all do they suspect her ladyship's maid, who has been with them for several years and bears a spotless character for honesty and truthfulness. Besides, it would have been too barefaced altogether for the girl to take it under these circumstances. She knew the jewels had just been put on the dressing-table, and that her mistress would be coming into the room at any moment. She could hardly help being suspected, but I don't think she did it."

"Was there time for anyone else to have gone into that dressing-room without being seen?" I asked. "You said that her ladyship rang the bell and left the room."

"That's just the point," replied the constable. "I find that it would probably be a couple of minutes before the girl reached the dressing-room from the servants' hall after her ladyship rang for her, and the girl herself says that her ladyship entered immediately she herself got into the room. So there's a matter of some two minutes during which someone else might have been inside. None of the other servants admit having been in that part of the house,

and none of them had any business there at that time. Anyhow, there it is ; the jewel case was lying open with the key in the lock, but the necklace has disappeared."

Constable Williams stopped, closed his pocket-book with a snap, returned it to his pocket, and sat down.

We chatted over the affair for a few minutes without coming to any very clear ideas on the matter, and finally I wished him good-evening and went to dinner. During the evening I was kept fairly busy until about ten-thirty P.M., when, feeling rather tired, I had made up my mind to go to bed early. I did so, but at two A.M. was roused by the night-bell. I always answered the night-bell myself. I argued that as it was I who was wanted, and who would ultimately have to get up, I might as well do so first as last. I, therefore, never called the servants unless something else was necessary to be done.

When I got downstairs to the door, I found that it was Sir Joseph's groom who wanted me.

"Well, Jenkins, what's the matter? Nothing wrong with the wife, I hope?"

"No, we're all right at home, sir, thank

you, but I have a note for you with Sir Joseph's compliments. I think they want you at the Hall at once."

I took the letter and read it quickly, but it gave me no information, except that Sir Joseph wished me to proceed as quickly as possible to the Hall.

"All right, Jenkins," I said, "I'll be there in a few minutes. Have you any idea who's ill?"

"Well, I'm not sure, sir," he replied, "but the butler did say he thought it was one of the girls. He brought the note down to me at the Lodge."

I quickly put a few things in my emergency bag—the usual stock that a country practitioner gradually finds by experience will cover most of the emergencies he is called upon to deal with—and mounting my bicycle, rode off quickly to the Hall, which was less than a mile distant from my house. I arrived there in about a quarter-of-an-hour after Jenkins had given me the letter, and, on being admitted, was informed by the butler that one of the servants—Lizzie, her ladyship's maid—had been taken ill during the evening,

but had gone to bed without anything serious being suspected. Later on, however, she awoke in great pain and rather alarmed the housekeeper, who had instructions under such circumstances to inform Sir Joseph, who was kindness itself where illness amongst his servants or tenants was concerned. He at once ordered the groom to be sent up for me, as I have described.

I was shown to the servants' room, where I found the housekeeper sitting by the bedside of my patient. I knew all the servants well, both by sight and otherwise, as I was a frequent visitor at the Hall. This particular girl, Lizzie, I had always taken an interest in, because I knew she was a special favourite of Lady Runnel's, who, indeed, had practically adopted her.

I found that Lizzie was very feverish and showed symptoms of some vague kind of fever, for which she could not account in any way. Her temperature was up, and there were indefinite pains, but I could not come to any clear diagnosis. I thought the case would probably declare itself in a day or two, or else would perhaps pass off in twenty-four

hours under treatment. I gave directions as to what was to be done, administered a soothing draught to the patient, and left, promising to see her again after breakfast before I joined the shooting-party.

I have already mentioned that I was engaged to shoot with Sir Joseph that day, so I left home a little earlier in order to be able to see my patient first. I found her a good deal worse; the temperature higher, the pain more severe, and altogether I did not like the look of things. Particularly, there was a good deal of mental depression which did not seem to me to be accounted for entirely by her feverish condition. However, I could not obtain any information from the patient on this matter. I thought at one time that possibly she was upset by the imagination of being suspected of stealing the necklace, but when her ladyship reminded me that she had searched Lizzie at her own request, I did not think this could be the cause. Lizzie, herself, had convinced them that the necklace was not on her person, and there could be, therefore, apparently no suspicion attached to her.

Anyhow, I formed the opinion that the case was going to be rather a bad one.

Going downstairs, I found Sir Joseph and Lady Runnel in the library, waiting to hear my report.

"Well, Doctor," said Sir Joseph, "how is Lizzie this morning?"

"A good deal worse, I am sorry to say," I replied. "She has got an acute attack of peritonitis, and I am afraid that she will be still worse."

"Dear me! I'm very sorry to hear it," said Sir Joseph. "I suppose she must have got a chill or something of that sort?"

"She seemed quite well up till dinner last evening," said Lady Runnel. "I wonder what can have upset her?"

"I don't know, I'm sure," I said, "but these cases frequently come on quickly without any very obvious reason. In fact, often one never can get at the exact cause."

"You don't anticipate any danger, I hope, Doctor?" asked her ladyship.

"Well, to be quite frank, I don't like the appearance of things this morning. I propose, Sir Joseph, with your permission, to come

back and see her after we have shot the first wood, and I shall join the party again after luncheon."

"Please do," he said. "I need not tell you, Doctor, to do everything possible. Spare no expense; treat her just as though it were one of ourselves. I need not say any more."

I then wrote a few directions, and Lady Runnel left the room to attend to them. Sir Joseph immediately turned to me.

"Now, what do you think about this other business?" he said abruptly.

"Well, I know very little about it," I replied, "except that some jewelry is missing, and that you have decided to employ a detective. So much I heard from the constable. You know, of course, Sir Joseph, it is impossible to keep anything quiet in this district, but beyond that, I know nothing."

"Well, I tell you, I mean to have the matter cleared up," Sir Joseph continued. "There's a thief in the house somewhere, and I will find him out. It's not only the value of the article, though that in itself is considerable, and that particular necklace has most interesting associations, but apart alto-

gether from that, I hate to have people around me who are untrustworthy. I expect this detective fellow to-night, and I shall put the whole thing into his hands and give him a clear field."

Sir Joseph spoke with considerable agitation, and I could see that he was very much upset. I began to anticipate trouble, and thought I would prepare a little.

"I expect your detective will commence operations by a personal interview with all the servants?" I said.

"Yes! presumably he will," said Sir Joseph.

"Have you any reason to suspect any of them?" I asked

"No! I cannot say I have," he replied, "but you know there are ten or twelve altogether in the servants' hall, and one or two of them have not been long with us, so one never knows. I don't care very much about the butler, but I don't think he is dishonest. I fancy he considers that he has a vested interest in the contents of the decanters, but I don't think he extends his views to jewelry, and my wife tells me that she has never had any reason to think any of the girls dishonest."

"Then she does not suspect her own maid?" I said.

"Good heavens, no," replied Sir Joseph. "Lizzie is absolutely above suspicion. Why, bless you! we have known the girl since she was a child, and when her parents died, my wife made herself responsible for Lizzie's future, and took her as her own maid. She has every confidence in her, and nothing would induce her to believe Lizzie the guilty person. She would never have thought of searching the girl, except at her own urgent request. Please put that idea out of your head. Whoever has the necklace, it is not Lizzie."

"I do not suspect her, far from it, but it occurs to me that when you hand over this matter to the detective, he will regard all the servants from the same point of view, and will probably insist, or, at any rate, request, to be allowed to interview Lizzie. I merely want to prepare you, because I cannot allow her to be troubled with him until she is better," I said.

Of course not," said Sir Joseph. "There is just one of the girls that might possibly

have something to do with it," he added, "an under-housemaid, who, I believe, is under notice to leave, for some gross impertinence to the housekeeper, but she had no duties which could take her to my wife's dressing-room, and probably did not know where my wife kept her jewels, nor that she always took them out herself."

"Well, we shall see by-and-by. It's no use jumping to conclusions without evidence."

The subject dropped, and Sir Joseph and I joined the shooting party who awaited us in the gun-room.

After the morning's shoot, I left them to have lunch at a farm-house—Sir Joseph being one of the old-fashioned sportsmen who insisted that it spoilt the day to go back home for a heavy lunch—and I returned to the Hall.

I found her ladyship sitting with Lizzie—she was kindness itself where illness was concerned. As I had rather anticipated, the poor girl was getting worse, and, there was no doubt about it, the case was going to be critical. A few minutes' examination satisfied me as to that.

Her ladyship left the bedroom with me, and I explained to her that I was satisfied it would be necessary to perform an operation, unless things took a turn for the better during the day. I explained, as well as I could, that all the symptoms pointed to an acute local inflammation, with possibly the formation of an abscess, and that an operation offered the only chance of recovery.

"Poor Lizzie!" said her ladyship. "I am very distressed about it, but if you will tell me what is required, I shall see that everything is prepared. When will you have to operate?"

"To-morrow morning," I replied, "at the latest, and if you will allow me, I would like to send a letter to Dr —— to ask him to assist me with the chloroform."

Having arranged this and other matters, amongst others having sent a message to my district nurse that I should want her in the morning, I returned to the library where some lunch had been sent for me. I had hardly been there more than five minutes before the butler entered, and announced that a Mr Holland had arrived, and said that he wished to see me.

"Show him in," I replied.

While I was waiting for him, her ladyship entered.

"Oh, doctor," she said, "I forgot to tell you that the detective arrived about an hour ago, and has been very busy making inquiries, and finally asked if he might see you."

As she spoke, Mr Holland was shown in—the butler's expression evidently indicating a most unwelcome visitor. Her ladyship left the room, and Mr Holland turned to me.

"Dr Oston, I presume?" he said.

"At your service," I replied. "Do you wish to see me?"

"Well, yes, Doctor. If you don't mind answering a few questions, I shall be obliged. In fact, you can do me a service."

"Indeed!" I said, "what is that?"

"Get me an interview with Lady Runnel's maid, your patient," he replied. "Her ladyship absolutely refuses to allow me to see her."

"Very sorry, Mr Holland, but that is just the one thing I cannot do. My patient is not in a condition to answer any questions, nor to be bothered with anything. It is out

of the question; the girl is dangerously ill. I am not sure that she will recover at all, but in any case, you cannot see her for the next week or two."

Mr Holland looked disappointed.

"Very well," he said, "then my presence here is useless."

"Why," I asked, "do you suspect her?"

"I suspect nobody," was his cautious answer, "but I am satisfied that no one else in the house at present is concerned in the loss of the necklace, whether she is or not."

"In that case, I should advise you to turn your attention to some one else outside," I answered.

Mr Holland only smiled.

"With your permission," he said abruptly, "I will postpone any further enquiries until I can have an interview with your patient. Sir Joseph has given me a free hand in this case, and I shall be obliged if you will kindly let me know when she is well enough to see me."

"All right," I replied, "but I tell you at once that it will not be for a week or two. She will have to undergo an operation to-

morrow, and I cannot prophesy the result. Even if favourable, her recovery will be a matter of some little time. However, she won't run away, I will answer for that. But I think you are on the wrong track."

Mr Holland absolutely ignored my remarks, and considerably astonished me by his next question.

"What if she dies?" he asked.

"Confound it, man, you don't want to see her if dead, do you?" I said, with some irritation.

Mr Holland hesitated as if about to make a suggestion, and then apparently thought better of it. Instead of saying anything further, he rose and wished me good-day. "I may tell you, Doctor," he said, rather solemnly as he left the room, "that I would risk my reputation on the statement that the only person who knows what became of that necklace is that patient of yours. She may be entirely innocent of theft; in fact, I rather think she is, but well! we shall see!"

I wished Mr Holland good-day and thought no more of him.

I did not rejoin the shooting party, but

returned home in order to work off all other cases as far as possible, and leave myself free for the following day.

As a matter of fact the operation was not performed until several days later, though looking back upon the history of the case, I realise that it was precisely one of those in which, nowadays, surgical interference is called for as early as possible. But several evenings afterwards, after a temporary improvement, my patient was so distinctly worse that I made all arrangements for an operation to be performed the following morning. She was too ill to be removed to the nearest hospital, which was some fifteen miles distant, so there was nothing for it but to take the responsibility upon one's own shoulders. In country practices, it is often brought home to one to be content when doing the best thing one can, which is very often the second best, or even the third best, which one can imagine.

I need not describe the details of the operation, which was performed one morning with the help of a neighbouring practitioner and my district nurse. My medical readers can easily fill in the details for themselves,

and they would not interest others. It will be sufficient if I say that I found, as I expected, an abscess connected with the appendix, and I was proceeding to deal with this in the usual manner, when I was suddenly startled by coming in contact with something that felt hard and gritty. In the absorption of the purely professional problem before me, it can easily be understood that, up to that precise moment, nothing was further from my mind than Lady Runnel's pearl necklace ; and yet, when I came in contact with this peculiar substance, it flashed across my mind in a moment that I had found the necklace, and I knew that not merely this girl's life, but her reputation for honesty, was in my hands. How or why, I could not imagine, but whether purposely or accidentally, there was no doubt that Lizzie had swallowed the missing jewel. I did not pause to think out the why and wherefore. It was her secret as yet, and my business was to keep it for her—for a time, at any rate. Very carefully I secured the object, and giving my nurse an order which took her to the other end of the room, contrived to hide what was going on from my colleague. I quickly with-

drew what I thought I had found, and transferred it to some cotton wool in the pocket of my operating coat. We then finished the operation in the usual manner, and I had the



I WAS SUDDENLY STARTLED BY COMING IN CONTACT WITH
SOMETHING THAT WAS HARD AND GRITTY.

satisfaction, a little later, of leaving my patient sleeping quietly, and apparently getting over it well.

When all was over, I proceeded to the

library where Sir Joseph and his good wife were very anxiously awaiting my report. Lady Runnel rose to meet me as I entered.

"Good news, I hope, Doctor? Yes, it is; I am sure it is—I can read it in your face."

"So far, all is well, I am glad to say," I replied, "though I hope you cannot read all my thoughts on all occasions quite so readily; but I am glad to tell you that Lizzie has stood the operation better than I expected, and I have no reason to think she will do otherwise than make a good recovery. Of course, it will take a little time; convalescence may be a little slow, but I have every hope that before long she will be well and doing her work again. All she wants now is good nursing and tender and sympathetic care—especially the latter—and that I am sure she will have at your hands."

"My dear Doctor," said Sir Joseph, "the girl shall have any mortal thing you want for her. You have only got to order it, as you know quite well. Heavens! how relieved I feel that it is over."

"Thank you," I said. "I shall take you at your word, as I always do; and you will

find that I have left full instructions with the nurse, and everything of that kind."

"Oh, by the way," said Sir Joseph, "I don't know whether I told you that that detective—Holland, I think his name is—was hard at me again to get an interview with Lizzie, and I am sure I was not too civil with him. I suppose one must make a good deal of allowance for professional curiosity and enthusiasm, but it seemed to me it was carrying it rather far when he wanted to see her before the crisis of an operation."

"I hope you entirely supported my action?"

"Most decidedly," said Sir Joseph. "That's the worst of these fellows; they never know their proper place. Because I told him to do what he liked, I suppose he thought I meant it. However, we will see that nothing of that kind is allowed to interfere with her peace of mind; but, mind you, Doctor, I am determined to get to the bottom of that necklace business, which, of course, has nothing to do with your patient. The thing cost a lot of money, though not mine, for it was a present; but, apart altogether from its value and its associations, I don't want any shady characters about

the house, and I shall never be satisfied until the thief is exposed."

"Well," I replied, "about that, of course, you must please yourself. It is your business entirely. I only want to tell you that when I somewhat unceremoniously refused the detective's request, he informed me that he could go no further until he had an interview with my patient, and he left it to me to send for him when that was feasible."

"What utter rubbish," said Sir Joseph. "What on earth does he expect from an interview with Lizzie?"

"I don't know, I'm sure," I replied, "but those were his conditions."

"Very well, then," said Sir Joseph, "let him wait. You can tell me when Lizzie is well enough, and I will send for him. In the meantime the matter can be allowed to rest, but I am determined that it shall be solved."

I wished Sir Joseph and his good wife good-morning, and went home, the pearl necklace safely stowed away and burning a hole in my coat pocket.

Arrived home, I sat down to think it over.

What was to be done? The situation was difficult. Put yourself in my position, my fellow practitioner, and think what you would have done! Probably you would have adopted a very different course—and doubtless a wiser one—to that which commended itself to me. I can only relate what happened. Of course, the sooner the necklace was returned to its owner, the better for all concerned; but how—without incriminating Lizzie? That was my problem. The more I thought over it, the less clear did I see my way. I could hardly bring myself to say anything about it to Sir Joseph or Lady Runnel until I had heard the whole story from Lizzie's own lips, and she was not by any means well enough to have the subject broached to her just yet. Finally, I decided that, in the meantime, I would do nothing.

I had no doubt at all that she would be intensely surprised in a few days when she learned that the necklace was in my possession, and I had a very shrewd suspicion that she herself had not connected her illness with it. But why did she swallow it? Was it an accident, a hysterical impulse, or intentional?

—and if the last, for what earthly reason? Time alone could explain!

Thanks to the excellent care and sympathetic kindness of her good mistress, my patient rapidly improved, and made a good recovery without any relapse. In a week, I considered her quite out of danger, and the uncomfortable feeling took possession of me that I must act soon and somehow. Once more I began to think and ponder as to how I could return the necklace to its owner, and, at the same time preserve Lizzie's character and reputation. It was all she had in the world, poor girl, and I was determined that that asset should not suffer through me if I could help it.

My first idea was to talk the matter over with Lizzie herself, get her to tell me all about it, and then, with her permission, explain the situation to her ladyship, and beg her forgiveness for my patient if the circumstances demanded such. On further consideration, however, I thought it would be better still if I could get her a free pardon beforehand, without her knowing anything about it. A little tact and diplomacy might manage that. I thought of a plan, and, having thought of

it, was rather pleased with it. It appealed to my dramatic instinct—always a strong one with me. I determined to try and put it into execution at my next visit.

Sir Joseph and his wife were in the library as usual, waiting for my evening report, and for the short chat which we always had on the occasion of my visits. After giving a favourable account of my patient, and indicating that there was no need for any further anxiety, an opening was made for me by Sir Joseph's first remark.

"I am very glad to hear she is going on so well, Doctor," he said, "because I have had a letter to-day from that fellow Holland, asking me if he is to consider himself still engaged in the matter of the lost necklace."

"Have you answered it?" I asked.

"No, I thought I should wait until I had seen you to-night, but I suppose he might have his interview now without any danger?"

"In a day or two," I said, "it will be quite safe. Just for the moment, I think I would rather Lizzie were not worried."

I turned to Lady Runnel and looked straight into her eyes. "What would you give me,

your ladyship, if I could restore your necklace to you?" I said.

"I will give you a hundred pounds, man," Sir Joseph interrupted most excitedly, "in addition to all your professional charges."

"Excuse me, Sir Joseph, I am not a detective. I am not asking what financial reward is to be given to the restorer of the jewels. I want to know what Lady Runnel will give me if I give her back her necklace?"

I knew this was a little bit too subtle for the good old Anglo-Indian, but Lady Runnel was one of those rare women whose intuitive gifts of perception is simply marvellous—women who know at once, when you look at them and speak to them with a certain expression and tone, that you are, in fact, making a strong appeal to their deepest understanding. It is hard to express what I mean, but my reader will follow me when I add that Lady Runnel immediately knew that my question demanded a very different kind of answer from that which Sir Joseph had been so ready to give. This was proved by her answer, which came at once and with perfect confidence.

"You shall name your own conditions, Doctor," was all she said.

I thanked her with a glance, but Sir Joseph was by no means satisfied.

"All you want may be your necklace," said he, "but I insist upon the punishment of the thief."

"Ah!" I said, as calmly as possible, "that's just the point. It all depends, you know, on what you call a thief."

"Don't talk rot!" said Sir Joseph. "You mean to tell me that you don't know what a thief is?"

"Yes," I said, "I know what I should call a thief. I am not quite sure, however, whether you and I would agree in the present case."

"Look here, Doctor," said Sir Joseph, "I don't know what on earth you are driving at, but I can understand this. In my opinion a thief is a man or woman who takes what isn't his, or who receives it from someone else, knowing that it has been purloined."

"I see!" I replied. "Then you would not be inclined to admit that the motive of taking it made any difference?"

"Certainly not!" he said, with some exas-

peration. "I don't care a hang what the motive was; the person who has that necklace is a thief! If you know who's got it now, it makes no difference to me why he took it. He either stole it, or is a receiver of stolen goods. In either case, he is guilty, and I will take very good care he is punished."

"Now, just suppose, Sir Joseph," I said, "that I could show you to your satisfaction that the person who has that necklace at the present moment took it in the performance of an urgent duty, and that his only desire was to restore it to its owner?"

But Sir Joseph was beginning to lose his temper.

"Duty 'be hanged!" he said, "if you can tell me how it could be anybody's duty to take that necklace, I will promise you I will never say another word about it. How on earth could anybody take a necklace that did not belong to him in the performance of a duty? Utter rot, Doctor."

I had been watching Lady Runnel, who had followed this conversation with great interest. Her womanly sympathy and intuition had told her that there was something underlying

my words which was not apparent. I could see in her eyes that she was ready to trust me in the matter, and I decided at once to play the bold game up to which I had been working.

"Very well, Sir Joseph," I said, "so be it. You have defined your idea of stealing. Now you can deal with the thief. I will leave you to settle the question of motive with your conscience. I took the pearls! Is that your necklace, Lady Runnel?" I asked, drawing it out of my pocket, and putting it into her hands.

"Of course it is," she cried. "Look, Joseph!"

Sir Joseph looked—and looked surprised, too, and not very pleased, I thought.

"What the deuce is the meaning of this, Doctor Oston? I think you are playing a very bad joke upon us. Will you be good enough to explain it?"

"Pardon me, Sir Joseph," I said, "I have given you my explanation, and you were kind enough to call it 'stealing.'"

"What do you mean, sir?" he said.

"I told you that it came into its present owner's possession in the performance of an

urgent duty. You translated that into my being a receiver of stolen goods."

"In plain words," said Sir Joseph, "you refuse to tell me how you got it?"

"Precisely," I said. "I take you at your own word, and ask my reward."

"What is your reward, Doctor," was Lady Runnel's remark. "Of course, it doesn't matter in the least now what else there is to know."

"Well, then," I said, "only that you will seek no explanation at all, until I give you permission to do so. Curious things come under a doctor's notice, Sir Joseph, and the family physician is not always free to say all he knows, even to those who may think themselves entitled to know. Of course, I know you don't suspect me literally—I am not so dense as that; I simply ask you to trust me for a little while. Be content! You have got your property anyhow!"

By this time Sir Joseph had cooled down, and I readily prevailed upon him to let it rest there, and to inform Mr Holland that since the necklace had been discovered, his services would not be required further.

"I think the person who will be most pleased to hear of this will be poor Lizzie," her ladyship said as I was leaving. "I am certain the loss has been worrying her."

Feeling absolutely certain, as I did, that Lizzie had not the remotest idea of the present whereabouts of the necklace, I made her ladyship promise that she would leave it to me to reveal its recovery to my patient.

Next morning, I had a somewhat curious interview with Lizzie. Gently, and with all the tact that I could command, I told her that I knew she had swallowed the necklace. As I expected, she was intensely surprised at my knowledge. I then asked her why she did it, and she told me. Once more I learned the lesson that some of the most puzzling things that one encounters have the simplest of explanations when once they are pointed out.

"When her ladyship rang for me to help her to dress," said Lizzie, "I went to her room to find she was not there. The necklace was lying on the table taken out of its case, and without thinking any harm, I took it up, and just held it to my neck before the looking-glass to see how it looked. Suddenly I heard her ladyship at

the door. I had no time to put it exactly where I found it without her seeing me do so, and she had always strictly forbidden me to touch the jewelry. For a second, I lost my head completely, and without thinking for a moment of what I did, I put it in my mouth—it is quite small, you know, Doctor—and in my excitement, I actually swallowed it. I was much too frightened to say anything, and now—Oh! Doctor, I shall be ruined. What shall I do?”

“I think I should tell Lady Runnel all about it, if I were you, Lizzie,” I said.

“Do you think she would ever forgive me?” asked Lizzie.

“Yes, I think she will,” I answered.

And she did.

So Lizzie made her confession under the impression that the necklace was lost for ever. Her joy and astonishment on learning that it was safe in its owner's possession may be imagined.

Then, finally, I made my explanation, and even Sir Joseph was satisfied.

IV

MR PHOGG'S IDEA

SEVERAL of the most curious and interesting cases that ever came under my notice were the result of my having studied, for several months, the methods of treatment adopted in cases of a mental character in Dr Wetterstrand's Clinique at Stockholm. I had long been impressed with the absolute futility of ordinary medical treatment in cases of threatened mental aberrations, delusions, hallucinations, and so forth, and having read a good deal upon the subject, I determined to devote a few months to the practical study of hypnotic treatment and suggestion generally. This I did, and I am bound to say that the result left upon my mind an impression which has persisted to this day, namely, that the study of scientific psycho-therapeutics is a disgraceful omission in our medical curriculum, and one which ought to be remedied at the

earliest possible moment. In the absence of such treatment, people who are suffering from all kinds of curious mental abnormalities simply drift into the hands of unscrupulous quacks who bleed them financially, and occasionally cure them.

I spoke of my experience at Stockholm with a good many of my medical friends afterwards, and it was to this fact that I owed the opportunity of treating several of the cases mentioned in these pages. When my medical friends encountered a case of this kind, which they frankly admitted to themselves was beyond the scope of ordinary treatment, they would send the patient to me to let me try my hand with methods of suggestion.

I do not, for a moment, pretend that I was always successful, but I had the satisfaction, in one or two cases at least, of succeeding in removing conditions which were rendering the lives of the patients miserable, and one such case was that now to be narrated.

Mr Phogg was a well-to-do butter merchant, of forty-eight years of age, when he came to see me. He explained that my friend, Dr —, was in attendance upon his wife, and

that in the course of conversation with him, a curious disability of Mr Phogg's had been touched upon, and this had so interested my medical friend that he had suggested to Mr Phogg that he should visit me.

Mr Phogg arrived with his daughter, a young woman of—I never could judge a woman's age—say about twenty-three. Moreover, she came with him into the consulting-room, and evidently intended seeing the matter through.

In reply to an enquiry, Mr Phogg told me his whole story, which in a few words was this.

Some twenty years previously, Mr Phogg was staying for the night in a country inn. He was quite alone, and had gone to bed for the night apparently in his ordinary good health. At some time in the very early morning he awoke in deadly terror, and apparently . . . did not seem to realise in the least where he was. So perturbed was he, that he quite lost his head, called out for help under the impression that something very serious was the matter, and was found lying in a faint on the floor by his bedside. When he came round, he appeared to be quite well physically, but

still desperately frightened of, he knew not what; but when his hosts had got him back to bed, and had seen that he was all right, they were about to leave him when he exhibited such symptoms of terror at the idea of being alone, that someone had to stop with him all the night. Next morning he was apparently quite well, but would not be left alone, and *from that day to this, twenty years ago, he had never gone one single step outside his house, or office, or other place of residence and work, unless accompanied by his wife, daughter, son, or other attendant.*

Such was Mr Phogg's statement.

"Do you actually mean to tell me," I enquired, "that you have never been out of the house alone for twenty years?"

"Never once for more than a second or two," he replied, "and then I knew I should have died in a few moments if I had been left longer."

"What on earth makes you think that?" I said.

"I cannot tell you," said Mr Phogg, "but I am quite convinced that if I were to be left alone in the street, or in any public place, I

should die from heart failure, or some such thing."

Now I realised why my friend had sent Mr Phogg. This fear of sudden death, if left alone, was Mr Phogg's one idea.

"How do you manage about your holidays?" I asked.

"I have never dared to take one for many years," he said, "except for a few miles into the country with my family."

"Have you never been abroad?" I asked.

"Not since the time I mention," he replied. "I could not possibly go on a steamer. Anything in the shape of a limited amount of space terrifies me beyond words. If I go to church, I have to come out before long. I cannot breathe—I want space. It's the same at public meetings! I daren't go to an election meeting or anything of that kind."

"I see!" I said, recognising those symptoms as part of a well-known mental condition. "Have you tried any treatment?" I asked. "Have you consulted anybody as to what should be done?"

"I have consulted everybody I can think

of," he replied, "and got no satisfaction from any of them."

"What were you told by those whom you have consulted?"

"Usually that there was nothing the matter with me, and I was advised to take a liver pill, or a little more exercise, or a tonic, or a change of air, or anything different from what the last man had said; but none of them ever did me any good. I am still just as unable to go about like an ordinary person, as I have been for all these years.

"Are you quite well otherwise?" I asked.

"Perfectly, so far as I know!" he said; and, indeed, I found on examination that this was the case.

After a few more questions, I dismissed Mr Phogg and his daughter, saying that I would think over his case, and would write to him in a day or two, and that I should probably want to see him again. In the meantime, however, I managed to have a talk with another member of Mr Phogg's family, who confirmed all that the patient himself had told me, and said what a very great trial it was both to Mr Phogg

himself and to his family, as one could well imagine.

Just think of it! It was actually true that for twenty years this fine, strong, physically-healthy man, had never once gone more than two or three yards from his own door, except in company with someone else, and all because he was firmly convinced that if he were left alone for a few seconds he would drop down dead!

Of course, I knew quite well that with a fixed idea of that sort, it was more than likely that Mr Phogg would have some serious kind of mental attack if left alone, and I could quite understand how utterly futile was the advice of my medical friends, and how absurd it was to say to a man in such a state of mind that there was nothing the matter with him. There obviously was something very serious the matter with him. A man does not make his whole life a burden to himself and a nuisance to others without any reason for it, and it does not help him in the very least to be told that he is quite well. When shall we, as a profession, realise this simple truth?

But the question now for me was—Could I

help Mr Phogg, and if so, in what way? The one or two cases connected with morbid ideas which I had already tried to assist had been rather encouraging, though none of them had been of quite such a definite and fixed nature as this one. However, Mr Phogg seemed to me to be an excellent subject for treatment by suggestion, or hypnotic methods, being a very strong-willed man otherwise, extremely clear-headed, successful in business, and physically sound.

I, therefore, wrote to him in a day or two, and pointed out, as tactfully as I possibly could, that I thoroughly realised that so far from being perfectly well, he was in great need of help, but that I was of opinion that, even under the most favourable circumstances, he would have to make up his mind to a prolonged course of treatment, if he chose to put himself into my hands. Without going into psychological details, I explained to him that what would have to be done was to re-educate part of his brain, after uneducating a portion. I told him plainly that I believed the only thing which could help him was treatment by suggestion, and that I was perfectly prepared to do my best on these

lines, if he would put himself unreservedly in my hands. I added that if he were willing to do this, I was ready to commence treatment the following night at my own house.

He acknowledged my letter at once, and promised to do everything I wished.

On the evening in question, he came again accompanied by his daughter, and I explained to him as much as was necessary concerning the methods that I proposed to use, and their effects both immediate and remote. I told him that the whole object of the treatment was to restore his will-power to a normal condition, and that directly he could say to himself, "I have no fear of being alone," and act upon that on his own initiative, he would be cured. I told him, further, that I believed it would be a very small thing to attain that result in a few minutes, provided that I could hypnotise him, simply by giving him a powerful post-hypnotic suggestion. I also told him that I did not think that such a procedure would do him any permanent good, but that the effect would soon leave off, and he would be left just as before. I explained that what I intended doing was to ignore, for the time

being, the precise difficulty that he had, and to devote my attention to educating and strengthening his will-power and control in a general way, until at last, I hoped, this special defect would disappear of its own accord. Having explained this, I proceeded to hypnotise Mr Phogg by the usual method that I adopted for that purpose, and found him, as I expected, quite easily influenced.

Then began a prolonged course of treatment at first administered three times a week ; then twice a week ; then once a week, and finally once a month, which extended over a period of almost a year. During the whole of this time my object had been the same, namely to produce in Mr Phogg's mind a complete blank, as far as the past of this idea was concerned, and to gradually build up his self-control and will-power in every possible direction. During all this prolonged treatment, he frequently told me how much better he felt in many different ways. He said he felt more able to make up his mind in both little and big things, domestic matters and business affairs ; that he could act more promptly, and, he thought, with clearer judgment. He slept better, felt better, and un-

doubtedly was better, and by testing him in various little ways, but carefully avoiding the supreme test that was to come, I was quite convinced that matters were going as I had wished. All this time, however, he never came to my house alone. Invariably either his daughter, or a son, or one of his clerks accompanied him. I found, however, by enquiry from Miss Phogg, that he spent much longer periods by himself in his own office or in his own house than he had been in the habit of doing, and that apparently he was becoming quite accustomed to being by himself, as far as in-doors was concerned.

So matters went on, and I began very carefully to put him to slight tests of being alone under conditions which would not alarm him, and always, of course, preceded by repeated suggestion on the matter. For instance, I would go to his office, and, when leaving, would entice him a few yards from the door, and leave him to go back alone, having warned him under hypnotism that I should do this, and that he would not in the least be bothered. Then I continued to make such little tests, without previous hypnotic suggestions, simply

impressing upon his mind that under similar circumstances he would not have any uncomfortable feelings, but that he would act just as any other individual would do.

Once I took him to a political meeting. I went with him myself, but after the meeting was over, I parted from him about a quarter of a mile from his house, and learnt afterwards that he had managed to walk home without anything more than a slight feeling of nervousness.

Soon after this, I felt pretty certain that I could make a supreme test, and convinced his mind that he need have no fear for the future. The time comes in such cases when one has to risk something, and it had come in Mr Phogg's case. One cannot go on indefinitely. It was necessary to play a bold game, and a final one, so on one evening when he was under hypnotic suggestion, I gave him the idea that should he receive a telegram from me at any time, he would immediately act upon it precisely in accordance with its terms. I then left him alone for a fortnight, and one morning after breakfast sent him the following telegram :—

“Please meet me at twelve noon at——
Street corner. Come alone. Dr Oston.”

I confess that I went to that corner at the time stipulated with some slight feelings of anxiety, because if this test failed, it would mean beginning all over again. Moreover, the place I had selected was a long way from his house, and this I had arranged intentionally, so as to be quite certain of the value of the result.

Just before I reached the corner of the street, I observed a considerable crowd gathered, and I hastened forward with some anxiety, rather fearing that Mr Phogg might have something to do with it. However, to my intense relief, on arriving at the spot I saw my patient amongst those gathered at the corner laughing most heartily, and apparently much amused at something. I watched him for a moment, and found he was not speaking to anyone around him, and that he was evidently alone. With great relief, I went straight up to him and touched him on the shoulder.

“Good-morning, Mr Phogg,” I said. “How are you?”

"Hullo, doctor, is that you?" he replied, turning round. "There has just been a very funny accident here."



TOUCHED HIM ON THE SHOULDER

I quickly drew his attention from the scattering of apples and bananas which had resulted from a collision, and enticed him away from the little crowd.

"Did you come here by yourself?" I said to him abruptly.

Of course, I did," he answered. "You told me to."

"Did you come from home?" I asked.

"Yes," he replied.

"How far is that?" I enquired.

"About two and a half miles. Why on earth you wanted to meet me here, I cannot understand!"

"Mr Phogg," I replied, "do you realise that you are cured?"

He started, and looked around him with a half-frightened glance, which I interrupted at once by taking his hand.

"You are absolutely cured, Mr Phogg," I said. "From this moment onwards, you can go anywhere, and do anything, you like. For the first time in twenty years you have walked two and a half miles alone, and you were never better in your life than you are at this moment. I shall leave you now, and you will walk back home by yourself. It is just possible that you may feel a little excited to-night. If so, come and see me, but in future any visit that you pay to me, must be paid by

yourself, unaccompanied, and, believe me, you can now go anywhere you like without the slightest fear. Do you understand me?"

Mr Phogg gripped my hand.

"Good God, doctor," he replied. "I never dreamt it possible. I never thought about being alone this morning. I believe I am all right."

"Of course, you are all right. You won't think of it again. Dismiss it from your mind absolutely. Now, good-morning."

With that I left him, and he did not come to see me that night. A day or two afterwards he called, and it was a very happy experience to listen to his obvious delight in telling me how he was enjoying his newly-found independence.

A week or two later, I suggested that he should take a fortnight's holiday by himself and go fishing, an occupation of which he had been very fond in his youth. He took my advice and went, and enjoyed it thoroughly. Then I sent him a short voyage, and in a very few weeks had shown him that he was capable of doing all the thousand and one

things of which a year before he believed himself incapable.

Thus, as the result of the expenditure of an infinite amount of time, trouble, and tact, I managed to dispose finally of Mr Phogg's idea.

V

GRATEFUL AND OTHERWISE

A WAG in the medical profession once divided all patients into two classes—grateful and otherwise ; and certainly none of us would deny that both kinds exist. Sometimes the contrast between the two is brought home to one rather forcibly. Such was the case in the two instances which I am now about to relate—instances which have nothing exciting nor mysterious about them, but which do illustrate some of the phases of human nature with which the doctor, of all people, comes into close contact.

The first of these was as follows :—

Most of my professional brethren who were qualified at that time will have vivid recollections of the winter of 1896. Those who were in country practices in England then will recollect that it began to freeze over most of the country on 7th January, and the severe frost continued

without intermission for a good many weeks. In my own district it lasted for two months, with the exception of one break in the second week of February, which was only a change for the worse inasmuch as it was marked by torrential rain. It was one of those old-fashioned winters which people talk about so glibly in a tone of regret. Most country doctors would, I think, be only too pleased if the fashion had gone out for ever.

At 11-30 P.M. on 9th February of that year, just a few minutes after I had locked up the surgery door for the night, with an inward hope that I should not be wanted again, the surgery bell rang. The night was pitch dark, but I opened the door without waiting to light the passage, and, on doing so, was confronted with two lanterns, which I immediately found were carried by two distinct individuals, each of whom was trying to enter first. There was a storm of wind and rain at the time, and I had some difficulty in closing the door, so violent was the gale. While I was doing this, I became aware that the two men who had entered were quarrelling between themselves, apparently as to which had arrived first. Lighting the lamp in the

surgery, I turned to the first man, who was an entire stranger to me and who was making most of the noise, and somewhat curtly requested



EACH OF WHOM WAS TRYING TO ENTER FIRST

him to be quiet. I then noticed that the second was a labourer known to me as Sandy, who was employed on the roads. "What's all this noise about? Just tell me quietly what

is the matter?" I said, addressing them both.

"I was in first," the stranger replied at once, "and you've got to come at once to——."

"You are wanted at Mrs Lawson's badly, Doctor," said Sandy.

"I don't care," interrupted the stranger. "My little girl's dying, and you've got to come back with me at once. I tell you I was here first."

"I had come up just as soon as you," said Sandy, somewhat sullenly, "and they told me to tell you you were wanted at Mrs Lawson's badly."

The two of them then turned on each other and began another quarrel, and it was only by a sharp threat that I would attend to neither of them unless they behaved themselves that I obtained quietness.

"Now, look here!" I said when I could get a hearing, "I suppose you have both got brains enough to understand that even a doctor has some difficulty in being in more than one place at a time. If you will just answer my questions without interrupting each other, I shall be the judge of who has the prior claim."

I then questioned them both carefully. The

stranger gave his name as Mr Rolls, and said he came from a hamlet some six miles away over a very bad mountain road. His story was that his little girl, aged fourteen, had been taken ill two days before, but that they had not thought seriously of it until this evening when she became delirious. From his answers to my various questions, I concluded that she was undoubtedly very seriously ill. Mr Rolls was not a former patient of mine, which he explained by saying that he had only recently come to his present abode, and had had no doctor since he lived in that place.

Turning my attention to Sandy, the roadman, whose wits were not of the most brilliant description, though he could be trusted to carry a message, and, as a matter of fact, was often sent to me with such, I found he could give me but little information. His message he had "off pat." Mr Lawson had come to him, and had promised him half-a-crown if he would go to the doctor and bring him back at once.

"You are wanted at Mrs Lawson's badly," was the burden of his song. But why, or for what special kind of treatment, Sandy was perfectly ignorant.

Mrs Lawson lived at Skewforth, an outlying part of my practice, exactly five miles in the opposite direction to that from which Mr Rolls came.

It was an awkward predicament but one which I had often foreseen, though it had never occurred previously. I had made up my mind, however, that when such an occasion did arise I should act as I intended to do now. Consequently, I addressed my two messengers. "As far as I can make out," I said, "I am wanted somewhat urgently in two places, eleven miles apart. You will understand that I can only do my best, and act as I think right. I shall go to see Mr Rolls' daughter first, and after returning, shall come on to Mrs Lawson's as fast as I can. It is now a quarter to twelve. With the roads in the condition they are, and in this weather, it will probably be at least two o'clock in the morning when I get back here, and an hour later before I get to Mrs Lawson's; so you can go back and tell Mr Lawson, Sandy, that I shall be there as soon as I possibly can, and you can explain, if you like, why I cannot be there sooner than three A.M. You, Mr Rolls, had better rest in that

arm-chair until I get back, as I shall probably want you to take some medicine for your daughter, besides what I shall take with me."

Sandy scratched his head, and muttered something about "Mrs Lawson's . . . badly wanted."

I cut him short, and he started back on his weary tramp. Mr Rolls, evidently immensely relieved, divested himself of his wet overcoat, and, taking my advice, comfortably seated himself by the fire.

In a very few minutes, my good-tempered coachman brought the dogcart round, and having put my emergency bag in, we started.

What a night! Driving sleet and rain, the wind bitterly cold—so dark that we could not see the horse's head in front of us. No one would have come five miles that night without an urgent reason. It took us rather longer than I expected—so bad was the weather—and, besides, I could not find the gate to Mr Rolls' House. I had never been to it before, and though I could see a light from a window where he had described it, it nevertheless took me ten minutes before I could find the way in. An English country

lane in mid-winter on such a night as this can be uncommonly dark.

I found my little patient, as I had half suspected, at the crisis of a double pneumonia, and I felt satisfied that whatever might be the reason for my urgent call to Mrs Lawson's, I had done the right thing in coming here first. I had but faint hopes of this child's recovery—there was just a chance—and having done all that I could, we started back for home.

It was half-past two before we got to the surgery—doctor, coachman and horse wet to the skin and chilled to the bone. My man insisted upon giving "old Jimmy" a rub down before we went on, and I, meantime, gave Mr Rolls the medicine required, changed my clothes, and had a hot drink ready for my man when the trap came round.

What a decent fellow that coachman was, when I come to think about him! During all the years he was with me, some seven or eight in all—until I left the district in fact—I never heard him utter a grumble at being called out of his warm bed, no matter how cold, or wet, or miserable were the conditions. I remember I once remarked to him upon his

unusual good temper and the circumstances which make most men surly. "Well, sir," he replied, "you see you never ask me to do anything that you are not going to do yourself, and many a time you go yourself without making me go with you."

This was quite true. I very often used to ride either for the sake of speed, or to save my man, but it is not every servant that appreciates that.

To come back to my story. We started again—the night was worse than ever. Think of the worst night on which you were ever out, my country doctor! It was just like that. The roads were in that condition known in those parts as "bad travelling." That is to say, the ground was freezing underneath as hard as iron, and being wet on top was as slippery as ice, and the darkness was impenetrable.

We reached Lawson's farm at a quarter to four in the morning. I found Mrs Lawson almost *in extremis*. There had been a premature labour, followed by profuse hæmorrhage. I never left her bedside until after eight o'clock—the horse having been stabled in the mean-

time, and the coachman looked after. All this time, be it remembered, I was wet to the skin, and sat in my wet clothes. Lawson, of course, swore at me for not coming to his wife first, to which I replied that he should have sent a more detailed message if he had anticipated what followed. Even then I do not know that I could have acted differently, or that I would again under similar circumstances.

The long and short of it was that both Mr Rolls' daughter and Mr Lawson's wife most fortunately recovered. I attended them both afterwards, and saw them frequently during the two subsequent years in which I was in that district, but—from that day to this—I *never received one single penny for the whole of that night's work!*

.

Grateful patients, however, are not all of the type just described, as the second incident which I am now about to relate will show.

About half a mile from my house on the main country road, at a point where it was crossed by another road, there stood a tramps' lodging-house, facetiously referred to by my

coachman as the "Commercial's Hotel." It was owned and managed by a very decent woman, Mrs Howe by name, a patient of mine. Mrs Howe had only one fault, as far as I was concerned—I don't know what Mr Howe thought—but the fault to which I refer was a little habit she had of sending her customers—the tramps—to my surgery to beg for the price of a night's lodging, which was fourpence, or sixpence if breakfast were included.

For a long time I used to wonder how it was that so many of the tramps apparently arrived at the surgery door about eight or nine in the evening with twopence or threepence in their possession, but never fourpence, nor by any chance sixpence. They would explain carefully to me that they just wanted another copper or two to make up the price of a bed and breakfast, and I am afraid they usually got it. I remember that at the time I mentioned this curious habit of these gentlemen to my coachman. "Well, you see, sir, Mrs Howe—she knows you're a bit soft," he merely remarked, with a dry smile.

As far as I ever saw, there was precious

little in the way of beds at this travellers rest, and I never had an opportunity of seeing what Mrs Howe's idea of a tramps' breakfast was, but the rooms were clean, and she was a good old soul in other ways. Occasionally I was called in to attend a tramp, generally for some trifling ailment—a bottle of cough mixture, perhaps, or some ointment was wanted. One of these gentlemen paid me for my services, and it is to him that this incident relates.

It was a very hot Sunday afternoon, the one time in all the week at which, if possible, I did not work. We always tried to make Sunday afternoon a holiday for doctor, coachman, and horse, and, as a rule, I think we managed to do so. On this particular day, I was dozing in a hammock in the orchard, when the servant informed me that I was wanted in the surgery. She said that a man wished to see me who would give no name nor any message. When I saw him, I could hardly think that he required my services for himself, for he bore every external appearance of most excellent health and vigour. He was dressed somewhat

shabbily—that is to say, he wore a handkerchief round his neck instead of a collar—but the heat of the weather made that a very comfortable arrangement.

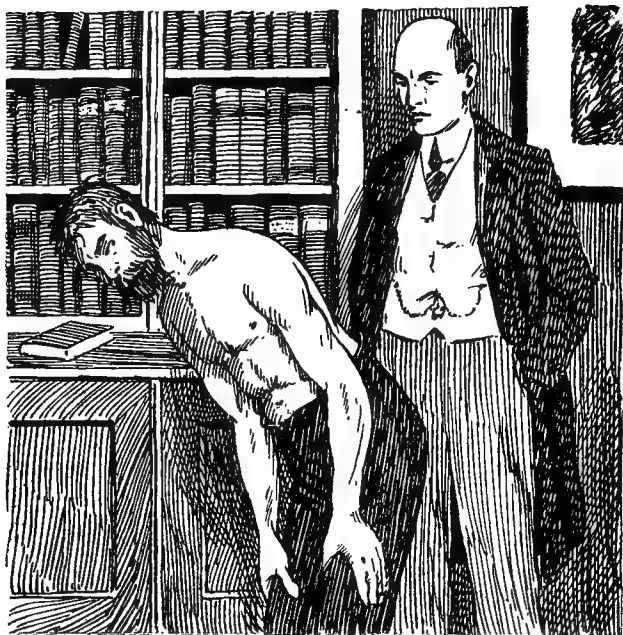
In reply to the usual introductory enquiries, he told me his story in a very straightforward, open, and somewhat off-hand manner, which, though his speech was rough, gave me the impression that he was speaking the truth. He said that he was tramping through the country, and had been for some weeks wanting to consult a doctor who, to use his own elegant phrase, “Wouldn’t split on a bloke.” I asked him who had been so kind as to give that excellent character regarding myself to which I owed the honour of this visit. To which he replied that it was “the old woman at the lodging-house.” I thought, therefore, that this was another little incident for which I had to thank Mrs Howe.

“Yer won’t give a chap away, will yer?” he asked.

“Certainly not,” I replied. “If you are straight with me, I shall be fair with you. What can I do for you?”

He smiled quietly, and proceeded to take

off his coat, then a jersey, and finally his shirt. He then turned his bare back to me, and bent down his head. "D'yer see anything wrong on my back?" he asked.



'D'YER SEE ANYTHING WRONG ON MY BACK?'

Placing him so that the light fell as I wished, I examined him, but the only thing which seemed at all in my line was a small

rounded lump, not quite so big as a walnut, which was situated between the two shoulder-blades. I conveyed the result of my observation to him.

"Aye, that's it," he said. "What do you think it is, now?"

The tone of his voice seemed to me to convey a sort of suppressed excitement.

Before answering, I proceeded to examine it more carefully. I found that this lump was hard, firm, freely moveable under the skin, and not painful.

"Well," I said, after concluding my examination, "I am not quite sure what it is. It may be just a simple small tumour, or it may be some substance which has got in accidentally—I mean a bullet, or something of that sort, which has become fixed there."

I explained to him, in as simple language as I could command, how such a thing might happen, and how any foreign substance of that kind would, as the result of its irritation, gradually form a capsule round itself. While doing so, I further noticed that there was a scar over the lump, and this rather confirmed my opinion that some foreign

substance had entered the skin at that point.

When I had aired my views at some length as to the possibilities, as they occurred to me, he laughed—a deep, quiet, chuckling kind of a laugh.

“Yer right and yer wrong,” he said, “there’s summat that got in there, but it ain’t a bullet. It’s a bit more expensive than lead.”

“What do you mean,” I asked, “and how did it happen?”

“Never you mind how it happened,” he replied. “What’ll you charge to take it out? That’s what I want ter know.”

Now, although I had formed the opinion that my patient was quite straightforward in his story, I was also pretty well satisfied that his financial circumstances were not exactly flourishing. Moreover, as far as I could tell, there was no reason for surgical interference. The thing wasn’t doing him any harm. I told him so, and said that I thought he could safely leave it alone without it giving him any trouble.

Again he laughed his low laugh. “That

ain't anything to do with it," he said. "I want the thing taken out; and I tell yer straight I can't afford to pay yer to-day, nor yet to-morrer, but if you'll take out that lump *and give it to me*, yer'll get paid right enough."

"Give it to you," I exclaimed. "What on earth do you want it for?"

"Look here, doctor," he said, "is that there lump mine or yours?"

When put in this way, I was bound to confess that, while my interest in it was purely scientific, his was certainly proprietary. I admitted as much.

"Well, then, will yer do it?" he said.

"Yes," I answered, "and I'll trust you to pay me when you like, and what you like."

"Give us yer 'and, Doctor; yer a real gentleman."

I gave it him, and thanked him for his good opinion.

"Go ahead," was his next remark. "I'm ready."

"What! Now?" I asked.

"Yes; d'yer think I'm staying a month or two here?" he said.

"Very well, then," I replied. "Sit down in this chair. It won't take long."

I quickly injected a little cocaine, and in five or six minutes I had excised the lump, which consisted of a hard fibrous capsule and a very hard centre. Another minute or two was sufficient to stitch up the wound and apply a simple dressing, and in ten minutes the whole thing was done. My patient had never moved a muscle nor said a word during the whole proceedings. I placed the specimen in a little cotton wool in a pill box, and solemnly presented it to him.

He looked at it very doubtfully, and a shade of anxiety seemed to come into his eyes.

"It don't look a bit like what I expected," he said.

"Indeed," I said. "What did you expect?"

He carefully put the cap on the box, and then requested me to wrap it up and seal it; which I did, and handed it back. In the meantime he had put on his clothes, and on receiving the little parcel from me, he put it in his left-hand pocket and kept his hand there with it. He was apparently about to

leave, but turned, however, at the door, and looked me straight in the face.

“Look 'ere, Doctor,” he said, “I believe yer a straight chap. I'll just tell you how it is. A year ago I was in Kimberley. I 'ad the luck to get 'old of a real big diamond—all on the straight, mind yer—but things was a bit thick round there just then. I'd had to take my turn in the trenches 'long with the rest of them, and the blooming thing worried me for fear I'd lose it. There was a doctor chap there in the know—'cute young fellow he was, too—and he agreed to put that diamond where no one could find it, but only on certain conditions.”

“What conditions did he make?” I asked.

“The beggar made me swear on my Bible oath that if I was killed or died at Kimberley, 'e was to do a post mortum, or something of that kind he called it—cut me up, he meant. And, besides that, 'e made me swear I'd give him ten quid for plantin' the diamond, and twenty to the man that took it out. 'E planted it where you found it. I felt him do it, and felt it after he had finished. I paid 'im the ten quid, and I 'ope you've took it out,

but it don't look like what it used to. D'yer think it's melted?"

"No," I said, "if what you tell me is true, I don't think you need worry. You'll find it all right inside that lump."

"Right! yer are," he replied. "If I do, you can have a bust when you 'ear from me."

So we parted.

Three weeks later, I received a cheque for £20 from a well-known firm of London diamond merchants.

I never saw my patient again, but I never ceased to supply an odd copper or two when it was required for a night's rest at Mrs Howe's, and I am bound to say that I have always thought that doctor at Kimberley a credit to his profession.

VI

TWO EXTREMES

THE BEGINNING

I SUPPOSE to most of us it would appear a matter of comparative indifference whether one happens to be born a minute earlier or later than any given time, and equally it would not appear to be of grave importance whether one departed this life on a given day at 11-59 P.M. or a few seconds after midnight on the following morning. After all, one has to be born; and one of the very few things in this world that is a matter of absolute certainty is that, having been born, we must die. To most of us, I say, a minute or two either way, in connection with either event, would not appear to be of grave moment.

But sometimes it makes all the difference.

Important issues may hang upon the passing of a very few seconds, and it may make all the difference in the world both to ourselves and others.

Two instances of the great importance which the trifling variation of a few minutes may make came under my notice within a short time of each other, and their interest centres around that very point.

One is concerned with the moment of birth ; the other with the onset of death. I put them here side by side because they have each in common the fact that a minute made all the difference. In the one case it was at the beginning, and the other at the close, of life's journey.

Most of my readers, I daresay, have at one time or another travelled by night from the west of England to Scotland, and those who have done so will know that some years ago—whatever the case may be now—one had to pass a tedious hour or more on arrival at Crewe, there awaiting the London Scotch express. Personally, I have unfortunately had to weary through that hour a good many times, and have

seen some curious things during it, too, as indeed one may see at any great British railway junction at a late hour of the night.

Those instances, however, had not a professional interest, nor are they concerned with my present theme on the particular occasion of which I am about to speak. The long wait was absolutely uneventful, and it was with a sigh of great relief that I observed the train thundering into the station about 1 A.M.

I was travelling to Edinburgh, as most Edinburgh graduates do periodically. There was only one through Edinburgh carriage on the train, and in that only one third-class smoking compartment. That was fully occupied by about half-a-dozen sailors journeying from Cardiff to Leith, and their bodies, together with their paraphernalia, more than comfortably filled the compartment. The next one was occupied by some Lancers who were sound asleep, and who, moreover, had apparently no intention whatever of waking up for some time.

In another compartment, two ladies, or what

looked like a lady and her maid, were comfortably settled, nor could I have made room for myself without disturbing them. There was, therefore, nothing for it but to find a seat in the Glasgow portion of the train. Fortunately, however, the corridor compartments had just come into vogue, so that I reflected that it was of no great consequence, as I could change back into the Edinburgh portion at a subsequent stage of the journey.

We had just left Preston behind—it would be about 2.30 A.M.—and the six of us (all men) who occupied the compartment were making more or less successful efforts to sleep while sitting bolt upright. I myself was very tired and distinctly drowsy. Suddenly the guard put his head into our compartment. “Beg pardon, gentlemen,” he said, “very sorry to disturb you, but does there happen to be a doctor amongst you?”

I suppose that in nine cases out of ten a full carriage on that particular line at almost any time, day or night, on any day of the year, would be found to contain a medical man of some sort, even if he were only embryonic or fossilised.

Personally, I was not anxious at that moment for a night call, but no one else admitted the soft impeachment. Several enquired what was the matter, but apparently it was left to me to offer my services.

"Thank you very much, sir," said the guard. "Would you please come along this way to the Edinburgh portion. There's a lady there been taken ill, and has asked if there is a doctor available."

We staggered along the narrow corridor to the compartment in which I had previously noticed the two women lying down.

The guard opened the door and showed me in. "Beg pardon, my lady," he said, "I have found a doctor, who is here. Let me know, sir," he added, turning to me, "if I can be of any assistance. My van is next door, just behind you here."

I entered the compartment, thanking the guard for his attention. For the first time I noticed particularly the occupants, one of them, evidently my patient, was a young and very handsome woman sitting upright as if suffering some pain, and by her side was the other

woman, obviously her maid or attendant, holding her mistress' hand.

The lady spoke. "Are you a doctor?" she said.

"I am," I replied. "My name is Oston."

"Do you come from Edinburgh?" she asked.

"I do not live there now," I replied, "though I visit the city at intervals. I am an Edinburgh graduate, however, and if you are a resident in Edinburgh, it is quite probable that we have mutual friends."

"Do you happen to know Dr ——?" she asked, mentioning a well-known Edinburgh specialist.

"Very well indeed," I answered. "He is an old teacher of mine, and I shall probably see him to-morrow."

"He is our family doctor," she replied, "and it may be necessary for you to see him on my behalf later. In the meantime, will you help me?"

"Most certainly!" I said. "Will you tell me in what direction I can assist you?"

Before answering my enquiry, she whispered something to her attendant, who rose quietly

and left the apartment, closing the door behind her. I could see the outline of her figure, by the light of the carriage, standing in the corridor outside.

Immediately she had gone, my patient turned to me. "I am in great trouble, doctor. I do not know how to tell you. Can I trust you?"

By this time, I had realised the probable situation; the signs were obvious to the professional eye. This unfortunate lady was evidently about to become a mother. I gently indicated to her that I realised the state of affairs, and begged her not to be anxious; that doubtless all would be well.

"It's not that, doctor," she said, pausing for a moment.

Then she continued:

"My child must be born in Scotland. I tell you, doctor, it must be! Everything depends upon it—reputation, fortune—Oh, I can't explain it all now! You must believe me. Will you help me?"

Her anxiety was pathetic; the situation distinctly embarrassing. I begged her not to trouble to tell me any more, and assured her

that I had no wish to pry into any private details which need not concern me. I understood quite enough to know exactly the nature of the service demanded from me. Apparently, at all costs consistent with professional honour and duty, that unborn babe must not see the light of day south of the Tweed, or rather the Solway, in this case. I found myself wishing, however, that the problem had been in the other direction. We had some hours or thereabouts before we should cross the border; ample time, indeed, if it had only been required that matters should have been hastened a little; probably too much time, by a long while, to be able to delay them with certainty.

By means of a short conversation with the guard, in which I gave him quite as much explanation as was necessary, I arranged that my patient should occupy an empty first-class carriage in another part of the train, and the removal to this was speedily carried out.

After seeing her comfortably settled there, and making what few arrangements I could under the circumstances, she told me in the

course of some further conversation that she was making this journey to Edinburgh with the one object in view of her child being born on Scottish soil. I gathered that it was in some way or other connected with family considerations of the gravest importance to herself and the child, and that it was necessary, in order that certain legal provisions might be complied with. The event had not been anticipated for a week or more. I saw how it was! The excitement of the whole matter, her own anxiety, the nervous strain involved under any circumstances at such a moment, the night journey: all these had combined to precipitate events somewhat.

I called the nurse, as I had by this time ascertained her to be, and satisfied myself that, as far as my patient was concerned, there was nothing whatever to occasion anxiety. I very much feared, however, that matters would be all over before we reached Scotland. I did not tell her this, as it would have only made things worse. She was anxious enough as it was. Rather, I endeavoured to persuade her that she need have no anxiety, that if she would keep perfectly

quiet and follow my instructions, all would be well.

For some time she was extremely excited, and then there came to me one of those occasional temptations to which, I suppose, every practitioner is exposed to sooner or later.

"Promise me, you will tell no one," she said, "if it should be all over too soon? No one would ever know. I can trust my nurse. Name your own price within reason. I am well off, and can afford to pay you."

As gently as I could, and without upsetting her, I told her that it would be, I hoped, unnecessary to do anything of that kind, and hoped that we should be able to manage it to our own satisfaction.

Again and again, however, she endeavoured to secure my promise to secrecy in the event of things turning out otherwise than we desired, but gradually I got her to see that it was quite impossible, and she became more reconciled.

By great good fortune, I happened to have with me everything that was required, and, as the journey went on, I saw that I must

have an interview with the guard, in order that one or two matters might be definitely arranged. Having taken what steps I considered necessary, I retraced my way to the guard's van and interviewed that gentleman.

"Anything I can do for you, sir?" he asked. "I hope it's nothing very serious."

"Thank you, guard, I shall want your help in one or two matters," I replied, "but there's nothing to be alarmed about, if I can trust you to do exactly what I want."

"Anything you say, sir, shall be done," he replied, "if I can manage it."

"Well, then, if you please," I said, "will you take care that that first-class compartment is kept absolutely undisturbed? It would be better, if you can manage it, to lock the whole carriage, but, of course, I understand that may be difficult. I need not say, guard, that I feel pretty sure any kindness and attention on your part will be duly appreciated by my patient."

"That's all right, sir," he replied. "I'll see to it. I'll do anything I can for the lady."

"One thing more," I said, "and this is the most important of all in this matter. Are

you engaged with any work on the train after we leave Carlisle?"

"No, sir, I can be at your disposal for a bit."

"Very well, then," I said, "can you tell me exactly at what time we cross the border into Scotland?"

"Well, sir, I cannot say to a few minutes. The time varies a bit, as you can understand. We may be a minute or two earlier or later in getting away from Carlisle, and then there may be a signal against us, or something of that sort, you never can be sure to a minute."

"Well, then, this is a very important thing," I said. "I must know somehow, and by some means, which I leave you to devise, the exact moment at which that carriage leaves England and enters Scotland. Mind you, it must be the very instant! Can you arrange that I should know that?"

"Oh, that's easy enough, sir," he answered. "There's no difficulty about that. I can be there at the time, and tell you the second when we cross the border, but I cannot be quite sure when that will be to a minute or two beforehand."

"Very well then, we must leave it at that. Only remember that the point is urgent, and not a moment must be wasted."

"Right, you are, sir," he said, "I will attend to it."

I went back to my patient. I found that my treatment so far was very satisfactory, and I had every hope that her wish would be realised, though I could see there would be but little time to spare.

At Penrith she was dozing quietly. At Carlisle she was wide awake and very excited, and I was afraid that all would be over. I was not yet, however, quite at the end of my resources. It seemed as if that wretched train would never start from Carlisle station, and, as you may well imagine, the moments seemed hours at that stage.

It was no good trying to calm her now by verbal efforts, and it was quite obvious that the crisis was near at hand.

I spoke to the guard. At last he managed to get the train away. In a few moments I observed him take up his position outside the door of the compartment, and observed that he was gazing out into the

darkness. I opened the door to speak to him.

"How much longer shall we be, guard?" I asked.

"Not many minutes, sir," he replied. "I gave the engine-driver the tip, and I should say that at this rate we shan't be more than eight or ten minutes."

A call from the compartment attracted my attention. I went in and found that I must give all my time to my patient.

"Open the door, nurse," I said. "Stand outside there just by the guard."

She went out and did as I told her. The guard had opened a window, and was looking out of it. Presently he withdrew his head.

"About five minutes from here, sir," he called out. Before he spoke he had apparently passed some landmark with which he was familiar.

There was just a chance—but no more!

An interminable period seemed to elapse before he once more called to me.

"About two minutes now, sir."

I could do no more: the issue of events was now in other hands than mine, and I waited in

the most acute suspense. The moments slowly passed, until I suddenly realised that it had become a matter of seconds. I was conscious of a rumbling sound, as if the train were passing over a bridge of some sort.

Almost before this had died away, once more the guard's head was withdrawn from the open window and turned towards our compartment.

"Scotland, sir!" he fairly shouted at me.

"Thank God!" the nurse murmured under her breath.

One minute later and all was over, though it was some little time before my patient sufficiently recovered from her excitement, to be able to realise that her object was attained.

Life's journey, for good or ill, had commenced for another human being, and whatever merit or advantage could accrue from birth on Scottish soil belonged legitimately to the new arrival.

I need not enter into the details of the subsequent events. Suffice it to say that I had the satisfaction of seeing my patient safely landed home, and of being very profusely, as

well as most generously, thanked by a very grateful family. I was afterwards informed of all that had been at stake



‘SCOTLAND, SIR!’

in those few moments, and certainly felt more than justified in my share in the result.

Many and many a time have I travelled on

that same night-journey since, but never have I crossed that little stream by day or night without thinking of the most exciting journey it was ever my lot to pass in the Scotch express, and of the man whose life at its very moment of beginning hung upon the issue of a few brief moments.

VII

TWO EXTREMES

THE END

BY a very curious coincidence the second occasion on which I was called upon to engage in a desperate fight against time occurred but a few months after my adventure in the Scotch express; but in this case it was death, and not birth, that was my opponent. It was a fight to prolong life, not to defer its onset. The end—not the beginning—was in question. The coincidence was the more remarkable in that both were cases of a medico-legal nature, involving matters of the greatest financial importance. In the opinion of those most interested, this second was a case of justice *versus* injustice.

Alfred Turnbull Esq., of The Oaks, Mountshire, was a retired Anglo-Indian, who has been in the service of the old Company.

I believe he had held the position of Chief Commissioner of some large district in India. His family had served the East India Company ever since that institution had offered careers of promise to Englishmen of brains and capacity in the sphere of administration.

He himself had retired from the service with a very considerable fortune saved out of his princely salary, and possibly augmented from other sources, and had for many years taken up his residence at The Oaks, which was the old family-seat. It comprised a magnificent house, together with a large estate, the rent-roll of which was some ten thousand a year. The estate itself, however, was very heavily mortgaged and encumbered; indeed, so much so, that Alfred Turnbull Esq. had given his only son to understand that after his father's decease it would be impossible for him to live in the old place and keep up the same style. Probably the place would have to be let to some merchant prince, as is so frequently the case nowadays in English country places. I do not think that this in itself would have been a very great blow to the son, whose tastes and habits were not

particularly adapted to quiet, country life, but there is no doubt that it would have been a sore trial to the mother and four daughters who comprised the rest of the family.

The more he thought about it—and it occupied a good deal of his thoughts as he got older—the less did Alfred Turnbull Esq. like the prospect of parting with a large sum to the coffers of the State in the shape of death duties, even though he himself would not be there to be personally irritated thereby. It was at that period immediately after Parliament had passed legislation dealing with these matters.

The old gentleman was eighty-two years of age, and, though in fairly good health, it was obvious that he was slightly failing. I was his ordinary family medical attendant. Mr Turnbull at last decided to consult his solicitors, and see if they could suggest any possible way out of the problem. Having made up his mind to take this step, he requested me to meet his solicitor and himself in solemn conclave one morning.

The interview began by the legal agent putting me through an examination as to the

exact state of health of Mr Turnbull. I informed him that a little while before Mr Turnbull had undoubtedly suffered from a slight stroke, a fact with which he himself was perfectly familiar. He had, however, made a perfect recovery, and, indeed, so far as his present health was concerned, it had left little or no effect. It was, of course, a danger signal, and one which could not be ignored. Sooner or later—we all have to die some time and in some fashion—in all probability there would be a second, and still later a third, stroke, possibly even more.

The somewhat pompous old solicitor seemed to think that because my medical knowledge could not state a day and an hour as the exact time at which one might anticipate these future attacks, it was a somewhat discredited and an unreliable quality. This attitude of mind on the part of the legal profession to the medical is, I have observed, not an uncommon one, and indeed it extends to all those who have to deal with cut and dry facts and quantities, but who fail to realise that there are many other problems of an entirely different nature which cannot

be weighed out like so many pounds of tea, nor fixed in time like the close of a shooting season.

“You see, my dear Doctor Oston,” he said, “the whole problem before us is the question pertaining to the iniquitous legislation which has placed such uncomfortable burdens upon those of Her Majesty’s subjects who happen to die possessed of means of any considerable amount. I need not say to you that a more immoral, unjustifiable procedure than this legal imposition has never been perpetrated in this so-called “free” country. It is not a party or political question, my dear sir, it is a question whether a man has the right to do as he will with his own, or whether he has not. I confess it is an absolute enigma to me that any man who aspires to the proud dignity of a British statesman, and who bears a family name hitherto respected in this country, could for one moment demean himself so as to assert his influence with a policy of spoliation.”

I listened patiently to the dry old Tory’s political speech without interruption, and presently he continued :

“Ever since that abominable measure was placed upon the Statute Book, I have been advising my client, Mr Turnbull, to take such legal steps as are necessary to make over and surrender in due form such a proportion of his estate and resources as can be conveniently dealt with. Up to the present time, however, my client has not seen fit to take the advice given, but now, when it is becoming amply apparent that such a course makes all the difference between my client’s family being able to remain resident at The Oaks at some future time, and from leaving it, I am glad to say he is more inclined to follow the plan I have suggested. I presume that you are fully aware that in order that such a legal arrangement may attain the object for which it is made, it is necessary that the original owner and testator should survive for a minimum period of one year and one day from the date of the execution of the deed in question.”

“As a matter of fact, I was not aware of it,” I replied, “that’s to say I was not aware of the exact time that you mention, but I knew, of course, that it was possible to

evade the law by some such measure as you suggest."

"Evade the law, sir! What do you mean? It is not a question of evading the law; it is a question of securing to my client's family the money and the property which have been theirs for generations, or which he himself by his own hard labour has acquired."

"Quite so!" I said. "I did not use the phrase in any offensive sense. In fact, I should like you to understand at once that the affair is no business of mine at all, neither do I wish to have any connection with it. I presume that you have invited me here merely to ascertain whether, in my opinion, Mr Turnbull is likely to live long enough for this proposed legal arrangement to take effect in his lifetime. I have told you that, in my opinion, there is no reason to think otherwise; but, at the same time, I am bound in duty to point out that my friend is well up in years, and though he is now, I am glad to say, in good health, a danger signal has been hoisted to which it would be ridiculous to pay no attention."

"Yes, my dear doctor, the reason we have

asked you to meet us to-day," continued the man of law, "is, as you say. Before deciding, upon this course of action, which I may mention incidentally is a somewhat costly procedure, and one which in this case cannot be carried out in a moment, we desire your professional opinion as to whether my client your patient, has a reasonable probability of surviving the period necessary to avoid those barbarous and infernal taxes."

He paused for breath.

"I can say nothing more definite than I have already stated," I replied.

I knew that sooner or later he would have another stroke, and that sooner or later it would be a fatal one; but whether sooner or later, and how much sooner or later, I could not say, nor would I commit myself any further. To tell the truth, I felt rather annoyed at being called upon to assist in a matter of this kind. It seemed to me to be their business to decide upon whether they should act in this way or not, and my business to keep Alfred Turnbull Esq. alive and in good health as long as I could, whether they took this step, or whether they did not.

"I am afraid I cannot help you any more," was my final statement. "I have told Mr Turnbull, as was my duty, that it is impossible to foresee the future in this case. I warned him, as I thought it was also my duty to do, sometime ago that he should put his worldly affairs in order at the earliest possible moment. If he has not done so, it is not my fault. Finally, all I can say is that as far as I can judge, there is no reason to apprehend any change in Mr Turnbull's health in the immediate future."

They worried me a good deal more, but nothing would induce me to commit myself further. Finally, I wished them good-morning, and left them to settle it as they best thought fit.

Some three weeks later, I received a letter from Mr Turnbull's solicitor, informing me that a deed of transfer of property had been decided upon and signed at exactly twelve o'clock midnight a few days previously; and, further, that in order that the estate of Alfred Turnbull Esq. of The Oaks, might escape the iniquitous burden of the death duties, it was necessary that the said Alfred Turnbull

Esq. should be still alive at midnight on March the 28th, 19—. Would I be good enough to make a careful note of these facts for future reference.

I acknowledged the old gentleman's letter, and carefully noted the facts which were to be brought home to me in a striking way later.

During the ensuing spring and summer very little change was noticed in Mr Turnbull, who, indeed, kept very well considering his age, and beyond a monthly visit which I paid to him—and which he insisted upon whether he were well or ill—I saw comparatively little of him.

His plan to evade the heavy death duties had almost passed out of my mind. Towards the end of the summer, however, he announced his intention of paying a visit to London with his wife, and staying there a few weeks. I thought, at the time, that the excitement and fatigue of travelling, and the city life, were not the very best things for him, and told him so, but he was bent upon carrying out his visit, and in due course he went. There the trouble began.

One day he had a slight stroke in his club, which was followed by another at his hotel, and from the latter of these he made but a tardy and incomplete recovery. In fact, it became necessary for him to remain in town for the next few months, and I heard particulars of all that had occurred from the eminent physician who had been called in to attend him.

Eventually, however, he recovered his health sufficiently to make the journey home to The Oaks, where he once more came under my care. This was early in December. I was very much struck with the change in the old gentleman when I saw him. He had aged tremendously, and gave me the impression that he was not going to last very long. Not only was his physical condition obviously very much worse, but mentally he had changed a great deal. In place of the intense and active interest which he had formerly exhibited in everything in connection with the management of his estate, he now showed considerable apathy towards all his former interests, and was becoming more and more irritable every week. He took no more note of local or

general politics, concerning which he had been most keen all his life, and in place of all these mental activities, he gradually became absorbed in one great, dominating idea, which was that he should live over the 28th of March next, in order to carry out the plan he had adopted in connection with his estate.

How the poor old man raved and swore at these death duties! Had there not been an element of tragedy in it, it would have been comic in the extreme. It became an absolute monomania with him; he thought and spoke of almost nothing else. His one object in life was to evade that which he denounced—in stronger and stronger language every day—in the recent legislation.

About this time, he began to insist upon my visiting him first thing in the morning and last thing at night every day, the last visit being paid about eleven P.M. I am bound to say that this was entirely unnecessary, as there was very little that could be done for him, but although it became a great bore, and was professionally most uninteresting, my visits seemed to comfort the old gentleman, and he paid me for them very well. I think it was a

relief to him to have someone in whose presence he could use whatever language he liked in connection with the subject which was uppermost in his mind.

So the days went on through January and February, and at last we entered upon the month of March, and only four more weeks remained in order that his end might be attained. I had hopes that if nothing serious happened before that time, his health both mentally and physically might improve after the fatal day, but as the actual day approached he became more and more excited, and gave me much anxiety. I feared that he would bring on another attack.

On the morning of the 14th of March, on paying him my first visit, I found that he had posted up in front of his arm-chair in the library, in which he now spent most of his time, a huge sheet of paper on which he had written out the days and the dates right up to and including the 28th of March to come. He would sit and contemplate this for hours, and refused to go to bed until midnight. At that precise moment he would solemnly cross out one date and then go to

bed. During the last week of the month, it became extremely difficult to get him out of that room at all. In vain I expostulated,



SOLEMNLY CROSS OUT ONE DATE

urged, begged, almost threatened. It was no use. Nothing would induce him to leave it. He came downstairs after breakfast in the morning, sat in his library-chair and looked

at his chart all the day; then at midnight, having scored off another twenty-four hours, would disappear for the night.

All this, of course, was the very worst thing for him, but he was a strong-minded old man with an iron will, and one who resented any attempt to interfere with his own desires. Anglo-Indians are not uncommonly of that type. His poor wife had a very bad time of it at this period. Indeed, so had everyone who came in contact with him, including his doctor.

On the 26th of March, I paid him my usual evening visit about eleven P.M., and found that things were coming to a climax. He was desperately excited, in a shocking temper, and obviously was doing himself very great harm by working himself up into this mood of resentment and fury. I determined that on my visit next morning, I would administer a strong sedative in the hope of quieting his nervous system for the next day or two until the critical time was over. I left him that night—the 26th—at about 11.30. I had hardly got to sleep at home when I was sent for. This would be about 1 A.M.

I hastened to The Oaks and found, as I feared, that he had had another stroke. The butler, who always assisted him upstairs—for he required help now—told me that at midnight precisely he had scored out his usual day upon the sheet in the library, and on going upstairs had shouted out, apparently to his wife, "Only one more, damn them."

Then, having dismissed the butler, he had proceeded to undress. Before he had completed his toilet, a heavy fall was heard within his room, and he was found unconscious.

He was still unconscious when I arrived at his bedside, and I found him in the condition which I had been dreading for some weeks. The breathing was laboured, the pupils dilated, his face drawn to one side—all the well-known symptoms. It was perfectly obvious that the life of Alfred Turnbull Esq. was now only a matter of hours. All that night, all the next day, and all the next night, his condition remained very much the same; his strength gradually becoming less and less—the vitality ebbing away towards the inevitable end.

I hardly left him at all during this time,

excepting for the absolutely necessary attention demanded from me elsewhere.

About midnight on the 28th day of the month—the day which he had to survive in order to carry out his scheme—he rallied somewhat, as such patients do occasionally a little while before the end.

He made efforts to speak, but his utterance was extremely difficult to understand, even by those who knew him best, his speech being thick, blurred, and confused. At one time he indicated that he wished to speak to me, and he struggled very hard to say something—I could not quite make out what. In a few minutes, after great efforts, it more or less distinctly resolved itself into, “Curse the duties!”

It was his one dominating idea to the end. Sad and pathetic, indeed, it was to see this poor old man—his fine intellect gone, his whole mind occupied by just one petty financial idea, which drove out all interest for his family who were round his bedside, and left him in a vindictive and horrible mood for one on his death-bed. As I said before, it would have been comic if it had not been a tragedy.

Towards evening it had become obvious that he was gradually sinking. He endeavoured to whisper something now and then, but, as a rule, the words were unintelligible. When he could be understood, his words were all directed to the same subject.

About eight P.M. the old solicitor, who had been sent for, arrived, and a little later the clergyman of the parish, the latter of whom was somewhat scandalised by the one or two utterances which came from the patient which were at all intelligible. A little later the family were all assembled.

The pompous old solicitor took me upon one side, and explained, in his own grandiose style, how much depended upon the issue of the next two or three hours. I told him that, as a matter of course, I should do all I could for my patient, but that the end was inevitable within a brief time, and almost certainly during the present night, which might be at any moment. He hinted that should I succeed in keeping Mr Turnbull alive over the stroke of midnight it would be worth my while.

How nauseated one does feel at times at the

proposals and remarks made to one at the crisis of events. How little the layman seems to appreciate the attitude of the doctor towards his constant enemy—Death. Imagine the offer of an extra guinea or two being thought necessary to stimulate one's effort to save a life! And yet it is common enough.

Then began the grimmest fight against the universal foe in which I ever took part. I need not say that everything modern science has devised for keeping breath in poor mortal bodies had been provided in that emergency. Everything was prepared with a view to meeting the actual crisis which had now arisen.

The clock on the landing struck the quarters, and at every stroke it was painful to see all those in the room look at their watches as if calculating how long it might be before the curtain fell. The solicitor requested me to note the exact time on my watch, as it would probably rest with me to say whether Mr Turnbull lived until the 29th of March or not. I sat by his bedside, watch in hand, with my finger on his flickering pulse—and waited. A

little after eleven P.M. I told those assembled that nothing more could be done until the actual end approached. It came ten minutes before midnight—the crisis—the sign I feared. My syringe was ready ; I hesitated not one second—the last shot in that battle was fired—the onset of the enemy was checked for the moment—but only for the moment. Those of us who watched the struggle saw him gradually returning. Tense and hushed we waited, and then, in that deathly silence, there suddenly rang out clearly the stroke of the clock.

Ding—Dong—Ding—Dong—Ding—Dong.

I looked at my watch, quietly closed it, and returned it to my pocket. The solicitor stood with his in his hand, the clergyman beside him. Slowly, as it seemed, the twelve strokes ceased—March the 28th was over—it was March the 29th.

A day or two afterwards, there might have been read in the London morning papers an obituary notice, which stated that Alfred Turnbull Esq. of the Oaks, Mountshire, had passed away on the 29th of March. There followed a sketch of his career, and an appre-

ciation of his qualities, but nothing was said of the thought which had occupied his mind to the exclusion of all others towards the end of his life. He had escaped the death duties. Whether it had been worth his while or not, who shall say?

VIII

A CURIOUS COMMISSION

THE incident that I am now going to relate was one of the first of the queer patients which came under my notice after qualifying. It occurred while I was ship's-surgeon, and the details were as follows.

The Royal Mail Steamer *Waimea* was lying moored at the main wharf in Wellington Harbour, New Zealand. Thick columns of black smoke were pouring out of her funnels, and the "Blue Peter" flew from the mast-head—sure signs of an impending departure. On board, all was bustle and confusion; friends were saying the last farewells, and all was excitement. The mail bags were handed in, the first whistle had gone, and the captain was already on the bridge. In ten minutes—at noon precisely—the steamer would leave for London.

The second whistle blew, and the order was

given for "all ashore." At that moment a man very hurriedly crossed the gangway, in spite of an energetic remonstrance from the sailor in charge. He showed every appearance of extreme anxiety. He addressed himself to the first person he met in ship's uniform, who happened to be the third mate. "Would you be good enough to tell me which is the ship's doctor? I want to speak to him before you leave," he said quietly, but in tones which betrayed great emotion.

"That's your man," replied the mate, indicating myself standing near, and jerking his thumb in my direction.

I was speaking to some ladies at the moment, who had just informed me that they had an introduction to myself, and that they were travelling with us to London.

I noticed the man turn quickly towards me. Then he touched my arm with an appealing gesture. "May I have one word with you, sir?" he said.

"As many as you like," I replied, "after we start, which will be in a few minutes."

"That will be too late," was his reply. "I must leave the ship in a moment."

There was something in the man's tone and manner which arrested my attention. He seemed to be in desperate earnest, so with a word of excuse to my fair friends, I turned to him. "Well, my good fellow, what is it?" I asked.

After a hasty glance around him, as if fearing to be noticed or overheard, he withdrew from his inside coat pocket a paper packet and placed it quickly in my hands.

"Your profession is a noble one," he said. "It is the most humane on earth. If you will examine the contents of this packet before you arrive at Rio Janeiro, and then act according to your kindest instinct, you will unconsciously do a noble deed, and most probably save a valuable life."

Without another word, he turned quickly from me, just in time to spring on to the wharf as the gangway was withdrawn. The last whistle blew. "Let go, there," yelled the skipper, and amidst a frantic waving of handkerchiefs and some shouted messages for the old country, we were the next moment steaming down Wellington Harbour, homeward bound.

For some days after this, I was kept fully

occupied with the many social and professional duties which fall to the lot of the modern doctor on a great ocean liner, and had deposited the mysterious packet in my desk, pending a quiet opportunity to examine it at my leisure. I had almost forgotten all about it, when one evening, about a week after our departure, on retiring for the night after the usual music and cards, it occurred to me that I had never opened the packet. I began to feel curious. Excusing myself from my companions, I went to my cabin, and unlocking my desk drew out the packet. I remember noticing—so do unimportant details sometimes stick in one's memory—that it was simply tied round with a piece of string and bore no address. Untying the string and opening the parcel, I found within it two letters. One was addressed to myself, giving my full name and accurate qualifications; the second bore an address in Rio Janeiro and was sealed up. I observed also, and I still remember, that the two letters were not in the same handwriting, and that the two envelopes were of quite a different character and quality. The letter addressed to myself was in a common white envelope, quite new and clean; the other

was in a thick, strong envelope, apparently of some age, and showed signs of having been addressed sometime previously, and carried about in the pocket since. All these points I noted mentally as I cut open one end of my letter—a habit I have in dealing with correspondence. The communication within was written upon a sheet of common white note-paper; it was undated and unsigned. It ran as follows:—

“Sir,—If you can deliver the enclosed letter to the address upon it before the mails which are carried by your steamer are delivered in Rio Janeiro, you may be the means of saving a life. I am trusting entirely to your professional honour, and to the secrecy always observed by medical men, and I ask you not to mention this commission to a single soul on board. After your arrival in England you may take any action you deem fit, or mention the matter as you wish. Your unconscious errand is one of mercy.”

It ended abruptly in that way, without any signature. I put it down, and lighted my pipe to think over the matter, but after several pipes, it became obvious that there was really nothing to think about. It was a simple question of whether I would or would not carry out a

request, made in a somewhat peculiar manner certainly. My impulse was to consult the first mate, a close personal friend of my own, but I reflected that by going even so far as I had done, I had practically pledged my word to secrecy, and felt bound to respect the wish so expressed. I concluded, therefore, that I would leave the matter until we arrived in port, and would then see if I had time to find the address named, and, if so, I would deliver the letter.

After what was, in those days, considered a good run of twenty days, we duly arrived at Rio Janeiro early on a Sunday morning, and it was announced at breakfast that we should leave again at midnight. The interval was to be utilised by that most abominable of all operations on board ship, namely coaling, and the passengers with one accord made arrangements for going ashore at once, and formed various little parties to see the sights. I came in for a good deal of chaff at the hands of some of them by refusing to promise to accompany anyone. I purposely kept myself free in order that I might discharge my curious commission first, and I had no idea how long this would take me. Moreover, I had the usual formalities

and duties to attend to before I could leave the ship. When free, I once more read the letter of instructions to myself, and then noticed, almost for the first time, that the success, or otherwise, of my mission apparently depended upon my delivering the letter entrusted to my care before the mails we carried should be delivered in the port. I, therefore, made some enquiries on this point, and ascertained that the local mails from New Zealand brought by our boat would not be delivered to residents in the town until late that night, or more probably on the following morning. This relieved me as far as that went, and left me the whole day to prosecute the commission entrusted so mysteriously to my care. I confess I felt a little bit uneasy about it on account of the mystery of the thing—one always fears the unknown more than any concrete evil that can be met fairly. But this vague feeling of uneasiness was much dispelled by the reflection that long before there could be any developments connected with the matter, we should be miles away on the next stage of our journey.

It was nearly mid-day before I was able to leave the ship. I made enquiries from one of

the Customs House Officers who went ashore in the launch with me—we were anchored out in the bay as usual—as to whether he could direct me to the address which I had committed to memory. He expressed considerable astonishment at my request, and went so far as to advise me to be careful as to my doings in that quarter of the town. Pressing him on this matter for further information, I could only gather that it seemed to be a somewhat disreputable slum or something of that kind. However, he was good enough to explain to me how to get there, though I had to enquire my way besides. After passing through the Fish Market, whose abominable smell I can always call to mind without any effort to this day, I found the street without very much difficulty, but the exact address was not so easily arrived at. Eventually, however, it turned out to be a very dirty and offensive little fish-shop, into which I walked and found a seedy-looking individual sitting upon an empty barrel, the sole occupant of the room.

I came to the point at once, and bade him a polite good-day. “Could you inform me if Mr Peter Slake lives here?” I enquired.

That was the name on the envelope given to me.

The seedy individual turned deathly pale, as far as that was possible to observe under his dirty face. "No, he ain't here; he's left some time ago," he replied with some hesitation.

"What do you want him for?" he added.

"Oh, I don't want him at all," I said, "but I had a message for him which I thought might be of some importance."

I had already a very shrewd suspicion from his manner that it was Mr Peter Slake himself to whom I was speaking, and no one else. However, that was no concern of mine. "I don't think it's anything very particular," I added, "but I had a letter for him from a pal of his in Wellington, New Zealand. That's all. But if he is not here, it can't be helped."

I could see he was immensely relieved at this information. He shifted his position a little uneasily, and still seemed rather suspicious as to my trustworthiness.

"I daresay I might manage to get a letter to him if you left it with me, if I had a bit o' luck," he said. "Someone I know will be sure to know where to find him."

“Very well, then,” I replied, now quite satisfied that he was the man I wanted. “Will you kindly give him this,” drawing the envelope from my pocket, “and tell him that I hope he will be as glad to get it as I am to get rid of it. Good-day!” So saying, I handed him the letter, which he almost snatched out of my hand in his eagerness which he could no longer restrain.

As I went out of the door, I gave a quick glance behind me, and, as I expected, discovered him in the act of opening the envelope. Before I lost sight of him, I could see that he was reading the contents.

Glad to be free from the foul air of the slum, and equally relieved to have discharged my commission, I left that part of the town as quickly as possible, and, after making a few purchases, took the tram—I remember in those days it was drawn by a pair of mules, perhaps it is still—out to the beautiful Botanical Gardens, where I knew I should find some of our passengers enjoying themselves. I had some trouble to satisfy their curiosity as to what I had been doing, but we passed the remainder of the afternoon very pleasantly,

and all returned to the landing-stage in time for the launch, which got us on board between nine and ten P.M. A few new passengers



HE WAS READING THE CONTENTS

joined us, and at midnight we sailed for England.

After a few days everything had settled down to the ordinary routine of ship life, and

I had almost forgotten my little adventure, though occasionally I did wonder of what kind of information I had been the unconscious bearer — whether good or bad. I wondered vaguely, too, where the errand of mercy came in, and how the life was to be saved. Certainly no indication had been given to me on either of these points. I soon, however, gave up thinking about it at all, feeling convinced that whatever lay behind the mystery, I should never hear any more about it.

A week before we were due to arrive at Plymouth we encountered some very heavy weather, and finally ran into a tremendous gale. The passengers were warned that it was dangerous to go up on deck, and very few did so.

In the middle of the night I was hastily summoned to see a passenger in the steerage. The steward who brought the message told me that this man had very foolishly gone up on deck, and had been knocked down by a falling spar, or something of that sort, and had been carried to his bunk unconscious. I was by his side in a very few seconds, and, to my intense astonishment, on turning him

over and seeing his face, I recognised at once the features of the man to whom I had given the letter, and whom I supposed to be Peter Slake himself.

All the symptoms pointed to some severe internal injury, and as a simple matter of fact, he never regained consciousness, but died in about twenty-four hours, and was buried at sea.

The sudden recognition of the identity of my patient naturally aroused the greatest curiosity in my mind. On making inquiry, I found that he had come on board at Rio Janeiro, and was booked to Plymouth under another name. Apparently no one knew anything about him. The only papers found in his possession were in the pocket of a shabby overcoat, and amongst these was the envelope of the letter I had given him. The letter itself, however, was not there, for which I felt profoundly thankful, because it enabled me to come to the resolution that whatever his secret was, there was no occasion for me to divulge my unconscious share in it. Death had settled that score, whatever it was, and it did not seem to me to be

necessary to say anything more ; therefore I said nothing.

That, however, was not the end, as I had anticipated. On arrival at Plymouth, a steam launch met us in the offing, and we were boarded by two officers in police uniform. After a few moments they were in conversation with the captain, who almost immediately requested me to join them. The captain then informed me that the officers held a warrant for the arrest of a man whom they had reason to believe was on board the ship, and that they must search the vessel before any one landed.

"What's the name of the suspect?" asked the captain.

"Our information is to the effect that he calls himself Peter Slake just now," replied the police officer, "but I hardly imagine he would be entered in your books in that name, as he goes by many others."

"We have no one of that name on board, as far as I know," said the captain. "May I ask what he's wanted for?"

"He's wanted for a most brutal murder

which took place at some gold diggings nearly a year ago," was the reply.

"The deuce he is!" said the captain. "Well, you can see if you can find him."

"He has been traced as far as Rio Janeiro," said the police officer, "and you carried the warrant for his arrest in the mails you brought from Wellington. The day that you left Rio Janeiro the police went to arrest him, having traced his then whereabouts. They, however, found that he had given them the slip; and though he himself had left no trace, they discovered on his premises a letter which informed him that he was in imminent danger of being arrested. That letter must have been brought him by some one on this vessel; but that really does not matter now. We suspect that he immediately booked for England on your boat, probably under a new name, and possibly disguised. He would almost certainly go steerage, so, if you will be good enough to accompany us, captain, and you, too, doctor, we will proceed to search the vessel."

"I suppose you haven't any description of him?" said the skipper.

"We have better than that," was the reply.

"We have a photograph, taken about a year ago in New Zealand, showing him amongst a group of miners. That's the man," said the inspector, exhibiting a photograph, and pointing to a figure in a group.

The captain at once recognised the individual indicated as the man who had been buried at sea a week before.

"I am sorry you will be disappointed," he said, "but that man is not on board."

"You must allow me to satisfy myself about that," was the reply.

"I tell you he's not here," said the captain.

"How do you know?" asked the inspector.

"Because I buried him myself only a few days back," was the reply. "And now if you are satisfied, we will get to our moorings."

"Just my infernal luck," said the inspector, after he had been furnished with all the details. "I have traced that man over half the world during the last eight months, and he has given us the slip at last."

We explained to the police how this man had come on board at Rio Janeiro, and how he met his death. I confirmed the particulars about his injury, but carefully refrained from say-

ing anything which bore upon my share in the transaction. It seemed to me to be eminently one of those occasions of which the proverb says—"Least said, soonest mended," but I registered a mental oath that I would not endeavour to assist any more murderers to escape, if I could possibly help it.

I could hardly help admiring the ingenuity of the dodge which had been played upon me, namely, the appeal to the humanity of one's professional feelings to do a noble deed, or an act of mercy in the hope of saving a life. It was clever—to say the least of it.

Well! I did my part. Destiny settled the rest.

IX

TWO LUNATICS AT HOME

MY experiences of country practice in Great Britain have been limited to two agricultural districts, in each of which I spent a few years, and I have often wondered since, whether those two localities—the names of which wild horses would not drag from me, and which bear no resemblance to those given them in these pages—are at all typical of other parts of the country, at any rate, in one respect, namely, in the number of people in them who would be described by Mr Storer Clouston as “lunatics at large.” Certainly in my practice there were, to my present recollection, five or six individuals in each place who could not, by any stretch of imagination, be described as entirely sane, and who, in one or two instances, proved themselves a source of some considerable danger to their neighbours. Most of

them, however, were harmless, if eccentric, though one of them, concerning whom I am about to write, was, according to his last statement concerning himself, apparently "a very terrible fellow." I confess I should never have suspected it, and I am not quite sure even now whether his allegation against himself was not a part of his madness; but I am anticipating.

One morning I was met at one of my out-lying surgeries by my district nurse, a lady whose advent into the district I had at first regarded with great satisfaction. Her salary was paid by a wealthy lady of the neighbourhood, and the nurse worked (or was supposed to) under my personal directions only. She had not been there very long, however, before I found that her ministrations reduced my professional income by considerably more than one hundred pounds per annum. This was due to the fact that a certain number of the patients soon got the idea that after I had seen a case once, and the nurse with me, future visits from myself were quite unnecessary, and that she could attend to them perfectly well. This too, however, is quite by the way.

As I say, this good lady met me one morning, and asked me if I would call and see a person by the name of Mr Weeks, of whom I had never previously heard. She described to me how to find him, telling me that his house stood at the corner of a crossroad at the extreme boundary of my district, an extremely lonely spot in spite of the fact that it was by the roadside.

It appears that she had been sent for on the previous evening by a message from Mrs Weeks, which requested her to go and see them at once.

"I suppose you went?" I said.

"Oh yes," she replied, "but I only saw Mrs Weeks."

"How is that?" I asked.

"Well, doctor, she absolutely refused to let me see her husband, and only told me that he appeared to be very ill, and was upstairs in bed. They seem to be the queerest people imaginable. From what Mrs Weeks said to me, I am inclined to think that her husband is not quite right in his head. Indeed, she almost hinted as much. The house itself is the funniest I ever was in. You can't mistake

it, because you can see from the roadside as you drive up, painted in big white letters on the side of the house the name, like a warning notice."

"What is it called?" I asked.

"Torquivo," she replied.

"Good gracious!" I said, "what on earth does that mean?"

"I am sure I haven't the remotest idea, but I think it is emblematical of either the inmates or their occupations, or something of that sort."

"Well," I said, "what did Mrs Weeks tell you?"

"Her statement was a very remarkable one, but the important point was that she wanted me to ask you to come and see her husband, as she was afraid he was very ill, and, moreover, he would not allow her to enter his room."

"How long is it since she has seen him?" I asked.

"Two or three days, from what I gathered," the nurse replied.

"Then he must be starving, I should imagine," I said.

"Oh no! he has an assortment of foods of various kinds, according to Mrs Weeks, from which he helps himself as he feels inclined."

"Then have you no idea what's the matter with him?" I said.

"Not the remotest," answered the nurse.

"Did you ask her who her ordinary medical attendant was?"

"No, I did not," she said.

"Oh very well," I concluded, "I suppose I had better go and see the people myself."

Having attended to those who were waiting for me at the surgery, I started off to find this curious household. On the way I discovered from my coachman that Mr and Mrs Weeks were well known, in a mysterious sort of way, in the neighbourhood, but that, at the same time, nobody really knew anything definite about them. They lived absolutely alone; never allowed any one to cross their threshold; were never seen together; but were apparently perfectly inoffensive, desiring only to keep themselves to themselves. They had lived in this house, my coachman thought, for about eight or nine years, at which period Mr Weeks

had purchased the property which had been lying empty for a long time, owing to a flaw in its legal title.

I found the place without any difficulty from the nurse's description, the name on the side of the house being conspicuous for a considerable distance. A small strip of garden, about eight or ten feet wide, separated the front door from the wooden gate and fence, but on attempting to gain an entrance I found that the gate was locked. However, while I was trying to open it, an elderly female made her appearance and advanced cautiously to the other side of the fence.

"Good-morning," I said, "are you Mrs Weeks?"

"Hsh! Hsh!" she replied, raising her hand with a warning gesture as if to indicate great caution. "Don't speak too loud. Yes, I am Mrs Weeks. Are you Dr Oston?"

"I am," I replied. "I understand you have sent for me."

"Yes, doctor, I want to see you very particularly. I am in a very peculiar position—in fact, I am in several different kinds of positions. I don't know which way to turn,

nor indeed whether I ought to turn at all, but on the whole, perhaps, I think it would be better not to, don't you?"

"Well," I said, "it's rather a difficult question to answer off-hand, but putting that on one side, can I do anything for you?"

"Oh yes! lots of things. One at a time, I should think, would be best, or at least one after another. Perhaps you might do two at once, I don't know."

(My coachman, usually the most stolid of individuals, who had overheard the conversation so far, judiciously moved on a few yards, and was extremely busy with his pocket-handkerchief, in fact, I am inclined to think I distinctly heard a smothered guffaw.)

"I understand, Mrs Weeks," I said, "that you have a husband who is ill, and to see whom I have been sent."

"You are quite right, I have a husband. In fact he is several husbands. Which one he is just now, I am not quite certain. I haven't seen him for some days; but I think you had better come inside."

"Yes, I think it would be advisable," I replied, "if I am to do any good."

"Wait a moment," she said, "I must go and find the key. I am not quite sure where it is. I usually put it in several places in order that no one can find it but myself." So saying, this extraordinary person disappeared to the back of the house, and was away for at least five minutes, after which she returned and proceeded cautiously to unlock the gate, after looking anxiously up and down the road, apparently to see if any one else should be near. There was no one, however, except my coachman.

"Where do you think I found that key?" she said.

"I really don't know," I replied. "Where did you put it?"

She looked straight into my eyes, and propounded the following conundrum :—

"Have you ever paid any particular study to the subject of the immorality of inanimate objects?"

"Well, no," I replied, "I can't say that I have. It sounds very interesting."

"Interesting! It's positively fascinating! Keys are the worst of all, I think; they have absolutely no principles at all. I never knew

a key that would act rightly, and certainly you can't depend upon them from one day to another. They are very seldom to be found where you leave them, and if they are, they won't move. Altogether, I think keys are wicked things."

By this time she had opened the front door, and led me into a little room, which I supposed was a kind of parlour, but it had the appearance rather of a jumble sale, or, at any rate, a corner of an old curiosity shop.

I cannot describe that room with anything like justice. Three things, however, stand out in my memory, which caught my attention at once. The first was an American organ, rather a good-looking instrument. It was open, and some music was displayed upon it which I noticed was foreign in both composition and print. Standing on the top of the organ was a huge model of a head, such as is used by phrenologists, and on this were printed all the different areas and bumps which are supposed, by the professors of that science, to indicate the whereabouts of human mental characters. The third very striking thing was a large plan or diagram hanging on the wall.

This, too, was printed in a language unfamiliar to me, and no sooner had I allowed my eyes to rest upon it, than Mrs Weeks promptly got up on to a chair and turned it so that the characters were hidden.

All this was very interesting, but time was passing, and I was a long way from home. I therefore made an effort to get to business. "Now, what about your husband, Mrs Weeks," I said, "I understand that he is ill?"

"Which husband?" she enquired.

"The one that you sent for me to see," I hazarded, thinking that this would be as good a description of him as anything else.

"Oh, I don't think you will be able to see him," she said, "though there's no doubt he is ill."

"Why not?" I asked.

"I don't think he'll let you," she replied.

"Doesn't he know that you have sent for me?"

"Well, I wrote him a letter this morning telling him so, but he's not replied to it."

"How did you give it him?" I asked.

"I pushed it under the door," she said. "We find that communications are so much

more easily understood when committed to writing. Spoken language is so confusing I always think."

"I see," I replied. "Well, in that case, since he has not given any indication, one way or the other, don't you think I had better go and see him?"

"I really don't know what to think," she said. "You see things are never what they seem, and if they were, they would be quite different. I don't think he is dead, but he has not left his room for several days—even at the proper time."

"What on earth do you mean by the 'proper time'?"

"Just what I say," she replied. "Time is either proper or improper. It's like keys. There are certain times when I leave my room, and other times when I stay in it. When I am in my room that is the proper time for Mr Weeks to leave his. When he leaves his room, that's the proper time for me to be in mine. I never can be quite sure whether he leaves his room, or the room leaves him, but I don't think that it really matters just now. The point is, he is still inside it."

"Do you mean to say," I asked, "that you have not seen him for some days?"

"No, I don't mean to say that, because if I did, I should probably say something else, but that's what happened. His door is locked, you know."

"Indeed," I said; "and have you the key?"

"Those keys again! One immoral key is enough for me. Of course I haven't the key."

"Well, where is it?" I asked.

"I expect it's in one of the places where he last put it; but then again you never know—it may not be."

By this time it was quite obvious that I should not get much assistance out of Mrs Weeks, so I endeavoured to persuade her to allow me to proceed alone to Mr Weeks' room, and to try my luck at gaining an entrance. After some considerable argument, the trend of which was by no means clear to me, she agreed that this was perhaps the best course to adopt.

Accordingly, I carefully mounted some of the rickety stairs, Mrs Weeks following me. Arrived on the landing, she struck a somewhat dramatic attitude, and, with a gesture

that reminded one of Henry Irving, indicated the door at which I should endeavour to gain admission.

By this time, I was quite prepared for anything, so I knocked gently on the door, and waited results. My first effort elicited no response. I knocked again ; still no response. Mrs Weeks stood immovable and speechless, and, turning to her, I was about to make some remark, when, by placing her finger over her lips, she indicated that I should remain silent. She pointed to the door again, apparently meaning that I should repeat my efforts. This I did, and this time I had better luck.

I heard confused noises and creakings from within, which suggested that some one was endeavouring to sit up in bed or something of that sort, at least so I imagined it, and encouraged by this I determined to make my presence known.

"May I come in, Mr Weeks?" I said, in a loud voice, at the same time endeavouring to put a friendly expression into my tones.

"Those may come in who do so by legitimate means, and for lawful purposes,"

was the response from the other side of the door.

Thus encouraged, I continued: "I am the doctor, and if you will allow me to enter I shall be glad to do anything I can for you."

"You convey nothing to my mind," was the reply; "but wait a moment."

More mysterious sounds proceeded from the room, and presently I heard the key in the lock very gently turned, then the handle, and the door opened about an eighth of an inch. "Do you see any sign of an antique specimen of a female vertebrate disguised as a woman?" a voice said to me in a subdued whisper.

"No, I see nothing of that kind about," I said. My back was turned to Mrs Weeks, who presumably was meant to answer to this description.

"Then," he continued, still in a whisper, "stay where you are until you have counted twenty, and then enter." The door was closed, and I signed to Mrs Weeks, who was still standing at the top of the stairs, to go down. Greatly to my relief, she did so, though with evident reluctance; then I turned the handle and entered Mr Weeks' bedroom.

I carefully closed the door behind me, and the key being in the lock, I thought perhaps it would be better, in case Mrs Weeks should have any misconceptions as to what were proper and improper times, that I locked it. This I did. I then turned to my presumed patient.

Mr Weeks was an extraordinary spectacle. He had got back into bed, and apparently had either forgotten my existence, or had chosen to ignore it. He was sitting up, supported by a number of pillows, his eyes closed, his hands folded in front of him, and making no sign whatever which would indicate that he knew I was with him. On his head he wore a most extraordinary article of clothing, which I supposed was a sort of night-cap. It was about a foot high; in shape something between a bishop's mitre and a clown's conical cap, and must have been extremely uncomfortable. His face was long, thin, pale, and emaciated, and he wore a beard, almost black in colour, though his hair was grey. The only articles of furniture in the room, in addition to the bed, were a chair, a large cupboard, and several huge old oak boxes. The window was wide open.

Drawing the chair to the bedside, I sat down beside Mr Weeks, and at once noticed that he was breathing rapidly, and with some difficulty. Gently taking hold of his wrist I felt his pulse, which was very rapid, and a most superficial examination of his skin, which was hot and dry, was sufficient to show me that the man was in a state of high fever. During the little manipulations which had so far been necessary, he had made no response, nor in any way indicated his approval or otherwise of my presence. It was necessary, however, in order to form a diagnosis, that I should examine him more carefully. "I am afraid you are very ill, Mr Weeks," I said to him. "With your permission, I'll just make an examination of your chest."

He made no response, and allowed me to do all I wished, and, as a result in a few moments I found that my unfortunate patient was suffering from double pneumonia. While making this examination, and listening to his breathing through my stethoscope, I made the request that one does in the ordinary way of such a case.

"Say ninety-nine, please."

"A century, minus one," was the extraordinary reply.

As a mathematical calculation of undoubted accuracy, this was beyond criticism, but it was not what I wanted. So I explained to Mr Weeks that I was not desirous of putting him to any great effort of a mathematical nature, but that I simply wished to test the resonance of his voice. "Will you please say ninety-nine slowly?" once more I asked.

"The square of ten with one deducted," he said.

Mr Weeks was evidently determined to practise mental arithmetic, so I let it go at that, and said no more.

I then explained to him that he was dangerously ill, and that I hoped he would allow me to prescribe such treatment as I thought necessary, and to look after him in every possible way. After a short fit of troublesome coughing, and in spite of everything I could do to prevent the exertion, he delivered an extraordinary harangue on medicine in general, and country doctors in particular, concerning neither of which did he seem to hold very complimentary opinions. He was good enough

to say, however, that, within certain limits, he would allow me to treat him. The restrictions that he imposed were, amongst others, that he should not have any medicine given to him which contained anything of a metallic nature, nor could he partake of anything in the nature of alcohol. He even drew the line at beef tea—this being, I ascertained, on account of his strict vegetarian principles. The case, therefore, afforded difficulties, but I did my best to humour him, and said that I would send him some medicine from the surgery as quickly as possible.

“How am I to get it?” asked Mr Weeks.

“My district nurse will call with it this evening,” I replied, “and I will instruct Mrs Weeks as to what I want her to do.”

This I found was a mistake on my part; the mention of the lady’s name caused him to take more interest in the proceedings than he had previously done.

“You must not let her come near me; she’s mad, but frightfully cunning, and very clever. Do you know she’s outside that door now, listening to all you say?” he whispered cautiously.

"Oh, I don't think so," I said, "she's downstairs."

"Walk quietly across the room," he whispered, "and open the door quickly, and you will see."

I did so, but the immorality of Mr Weeks' key gave me away, and I was only just in time to see the good lady disappearing down the stairs. He was right, however, she had been there.

"The best thing to do under these circumstances," I said, "will be for my nurse to attend to you herself."

But this, too, Mr Weeks negatived on some grounds or other, contending, amongst other things, that Mrs Weeks would not allow the nurse to come near him. There appeared to be nothing for it but to return myself, very inconvenient as it was, but the man was nearing the crisis of a dangerous illness, and might easily die.

I, therefore, indicated to him that I would finish my rounds as soon as I could, and come back to him later, bringing with me all I required.

My patient seemed, or at least so I

imagined, considerably relieved at this proposal of mine, and after giving him such treatment as I had with me in my bag, I bade him farewell for the present, and left the room. No sooner had I done so, than Mr Weeks must have got out of bed and come to the door, for I heard the key turn in it as I went downstairs.

I explained to Mrs Weeks the condition of the patient upstairs, and endeavoured to impress upon her the fact that there was some responsibility on her shoulders in connection with looking after him.

She at once professed herself most willing to make him anything in the way of food or nourishment which I ordered, but told me on no account would he allow her to enter his bedroom, but that she would put the nourishment outside his door, and convey to him by letter, in the usual way, that it was there.

I was left with the unfortunate choice of either having to let my patient starve in the meantime, or run the risk of getting out of bed and all that that involved. There was nothing for it, and I was about to leave.

"I hardly like to tell you, doctor," said Mrs Weeks in a most impressive manner, "and yet I think I ought, or if I ought not, I cannot remember just now why, but there is a great secret connected with this house and the man you have just seen."

"I think you had better tell me everything," I replied, "if it will help me in my work."

"Well, the very truth is," she continued, putting her hand on my arm and speaking very low, "that he is quite mad. He has been mad for years, or if he is not mad, he's madder, I forget which."

This seemed quite likely, but at any rate not a profitable source of argument, so, promising that I would maintain due secrecy on the matter, I left her.

I hastened to complete my round of visits, and on arrival home proceeded to concoct, for Mr Weeks' benefit, a prescription, which, as regards the nature of its ingredients, I am bound to say did not fall in exactly with all the various principles which he had promulgated to me. I need not go into details, but my recollection is that it was not

entirely free from good old port and some other things, which, made into a judicious mixture, I hoped to be able to persuade him to swallow. Fortunately, there are other ways of administering the essential portions of a meat diet than by means of beefsteaks.

I found myself later in the evening again by Mr Weeks' bedside. This time I had no difficulty in gaining admission, though, as before, I found the door locked, and outside it one or two empty basins. I presumed, therefore, that my patient had had some nourishment. I did all I could for him, and sat with him a considerable time, and, fortunately, he partook of the medicine which I had prescribed, at intervals of a few minutes, without any hesitation.

I had the satisfaction of finally seeing him fall asleep, which was what I most desired. I feared, however, to leave him in that condition on account of complications in connection with the door, and so remained for several hours. That sleep probably saved his life, for, as it happens, he did live.

As so often happens in similar cases, his convalescence was singularly rapid, and in

the course of a week, during which time I had seen him night and morning, he was practically out of danger. We had many extraordinary conversations about that time, and I discovered that Mr Weeks, who was apparently a foreigner to judge by his accent, was a man of extremely wide reading, and very well educated, but whose ideas seemed in some way or other to have become most hopelessly mixed in many important directions.

He told me himself that he had plenty of money, that he held an important position in the world—though of its nature I never could gather anything—that the property was his own, and that for reasons that I would not understand if he mentioned them, he and the antique vertebrate downstairs had not spoken to each other for some years. His main objection to her was that she was mentally incapable, and curiously enough that was precisely what she said of him. Long before my attendance had ceased, I had come to the conclusion that both of them were perfectly right. As a matter of fact, they each on different occasions endeavoured to get me to consign the other to a lunatic

asylum, but I always put the matter off with some excuse or another, though I have, amongst my correspondence, letters from this extraordinary couple which make one of the most interesting psychological studies I have ever encountered.

Towards the end of my attendance, on several occasions when I visited the house, Mr Weeks was up and about, while there was no sign of his wife to be seen. From her point of view the time was evidently improper. Finally, I said good-bye to him, and wondered if we should ever meet again. We did not do so for a year or more, and then under still more extraordinary circumstances.

In the interval, however, I had more than one curious and interesting interview with Mrs Weeks. She would come down to my surgery and wait until I had attended to all my patients, and then lay before me with great detail, in her curious diction, all the extraordinary doings of her extraordinary husband. She always concluded by asking me whether what she had said was not sufficient evidence for his certification as a

lunatic. For some reason or other she certainly was extremely anxious to get Mr Weeks removed to an asylum. The current gossip of the countryside credited her with a desire to obtain possession, or, at any rate, control, of his money, but whether that were so or not I am unable to say. After a time, finding that she was not likely to get any satisfaction from me—for of the two lunatics I think she was the madder—she gave up worrying me on the matter, and I saw no more of either of them for a time.

My last meeting with this curious couple was destined, however, to partake of the tragic element, though I am bound in truth to confess that it too had its humorous side. It came about in this way.

One morning I received the following letter by the early post from Mrs Weeks:—

“DEAR DR OSTON,—I think it would be just as well, if not better, if you would call in and see us the first time you are passing. The day after to-morrow would do; the day before yesterday would be best, but I am afraid that’s too late. It’s a pity though, as you will agree when you see us. Mr Weeks has been very much upset by some letters which arrived a

few days ago from abroad, concerning things which we thought were done with. They will be done with by the time you get this. We are done with them, and they with us, and we with everybody. Thank you very much for all you have done for us. I think you have acted up to your lights, which I must say were rather dim, if not dimmer, but then again, they may not be. Trusting that you will see me before long.—Yours faithfully,

“C. WEEKS.”

I confess I did not pay much attention to this letter at the time. I had got somewhat accustomed to curious effusions from Mrs Weeks, but in the light of after events there were certainly one or two phrases in it which might have attracted some special attention. However, a few minutes after I had finished reading it, I was informed that the village constable wished to see me, and I found Williams in the surgery, apparently in rather a hurry.

“What’s the matter this morning, Williams?” I said.

“Well, I don’t rightly know, doctor, but I’ve got a very curious letter here which I think you had better read. Perhaps you will advise me what I should do.”

"Who is it from?" I asked.

"It's from that queer old patient of yours who lives up at the crossroads away over the hill."

"You don't mean Mr Weeks, do you?" I said.

"Yes, that's the man I mean. They say he's got a wife who's a harmless lunatic."

"Yes, and that's what she says of him," I said. "However, let me see the letter."

He handed me the note, which ran as follows :—

"DEAR SIR, — I understand that you are the supreme local representative of the law in this particular, and in some respects peculiar, district. Personally, I have no respect for the law, but there are times when it must be allowed to take its course, and this is one of them. You will understand better what I mean if you will be good enough to call at this house at your earliest convenience, although a few minutes, or even a few hours, sooner or later would not be a matter of any great importance; still you had better come before long. The front gate is unlocked. I am afraid you will have to break open the front door. It was necessary to lock it on the inside.—Yours faithfully,

"PAUL WEEKS."

"What a curious thing!" I said. "Do you know I have just received a mysterious epistle from the lady herself, Mrs Weeks. I wonder what the old couple are up to."

"Can't say, I'm sure, sir," said Williams, "but if you are not too busy this morning, doctor, I think it might be as well if we were to go and look them up."

"I quite agree with you," I replied. "I am not particularly busy to-day, and can quite well get out there. In fact, I will drive you out, Williams, if you will meet me along the road. I shall be ready in half an hour or so, and shall overtake you."

"Right you are, sir," said the constable rising, and off he went.

I ordered the trap, attended to one or two little things at the surgery, and started off. I overtook Williams about a mile and a half from the village, and he got up behind on the dogcart.

After about an hour's drive we reached the house. Williams and I looked all round the place outside, but could see no signs of life. The blinds were all pulled down, and the front door, as stated in the letter to Constable

Williams, was locked. We knocked several times but received no reply. We then held a council of war as to what was to be done. Constable Williams hesitated before using violence to break in the door in the absence of any obvious reason for that course. I pointed out to him, however, that the owner of the door, Mr Weeks himself, had suggested that this very step would have to be taken, and that the constable would be, therefore, quite justified in so doing.

"Well, doctor," he said, "perhaps you are right. Anyhow, now we are here we have got to get in and see what's the matter, or why we have been sent for. Wait a minute, I'll just try some of these windows."

Williams then proceeded to try all the windows on the ground-floor, and presently found one at the back which opened.

"Here you are, doctor," he cried, "we can get in here without breaking the door open," and accordingly we scrambled through and found ourselves in the back-kitchen.

The house was in deadly silence. A clock standing on the mantelpiece had stopped.

Everything was quite tidy in this room, which did not look as if it had been used for a day or two.

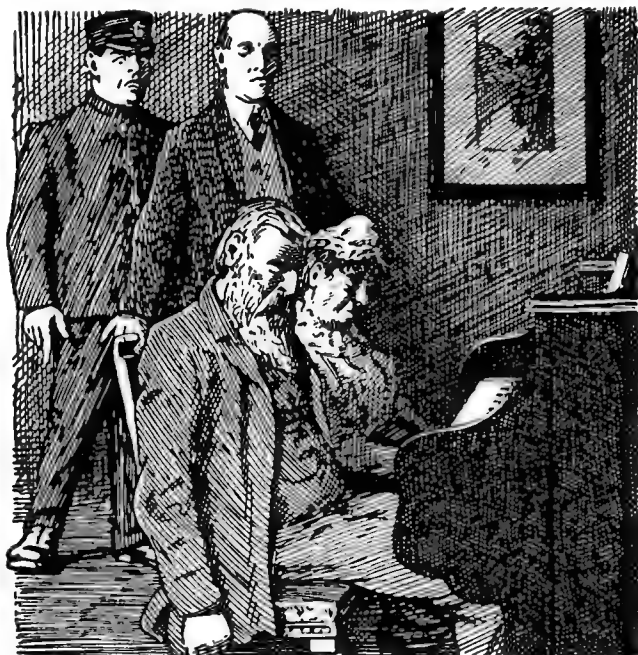
"We shall have to search the house, sir," said Williams. "Somehow or another, I have got a feeling that there is something wrong here. I wonder why all the blinds are down?"

"Oh, I don't know," I replied, "but I should never be surprised at anything these people did. They are both very eccentric. Try the front sitting-room," I said, "that's where Mrs Weeks used to spend most of her time, I think. No, not that one, the one on the left."

We had reached the door of the room into which I had been shown by Mrs Weeks on the occasion of my first visit—the room in which my readers may remember I had mentioned the existence of an American organ amongst other things. This room opened off the passage which led to the front door, and before entering it I proceeded to the front door and found it locked on the inside. The key, however, was in the lock, and I turned it and opened the door to let in some air and light.

"That's better, sir," said the constable. "Now let's try this room."

That door too, however, was locked, but Williams, who by this time was quite sure that he was on the track of something that



"GOOD LORD, SIR, THEY ARE BOTH DEAD!"

was in his line, and relating to himself and his position, easily forced it open without doing much damage.

An extraordinary scene met our eyes as we stepped into the room. Seated at the organ,

their backs to us as we entered, were Mr and Mrs Weeks, looking as if they had been in the act of playing a duet, Mr Weeks taking the treble part, Mrs Weeks the bass. A glance, however, at the attitudes they were in, showed me at once that they were no longer living.

"Steady, Williams," I said, "there's a tragedy here, if I am not mistaken."

"Good Lord, sir," he said, "they are both dead!"

We stepped forward, and sure enough found from a moment's inspection that such was the case. The organ was open, and on the music-stand, where one would have expected to find the music, had they been playing, was a sheet of foolscap on which was written the following somewhat cryptic statement:—

"We are both agreed that the whole thing is ridiculous, and, that being so, why should it? If you will be good enough to inform, at your convenience, the Chief of the Russian Secret Police that this is the last appearance of the undersigned, that gentleman will, I have no doubt, be considerably relieved."

Underneath this was the signature,

"PAUL KUTOFF."

I read these lines in blank amazement.

They suggested that the person whom I had known as "Mr Weeks" may have had a very different personality in other spheres, or, of course, it may have been that he simply imagined himself some one else. In any case, it was now a question for the police and the coroner, and this was the more obvious, when, on looking a little closer, we discovered very apparent evidence of the use of poison.

I need not go into the somewhat gruesome details of my duties in connection with the subsequent events. Constable Williams, of course, took charge of the place at once, and in due course an inquest was held at the nearest inn. Oh, those country village inquests! What a colossal farce they very often are, and sometimes how extremely amusing! How the jury enjoy their importance on the day, and how the coroner does twist them all round his little finger!

In this particular case there was a good deal of evidence which was nothing more or less than local gossip, and which had no bearing upon the final events. Apparently the last person who had seen either Mr or Mrs Weeks alive was the postman who had

delivered some letters to Mrs Weeks about a week before, which he said bore foreign post-marks. They were not found, however, in the house, nor was any documentary evidence of any kind forthcoming to connect Mr Weeks with anything of a suspicious nature. The constable and myself deposed to having found the bodies in the manner I have related, and then my medical evidence clearly showed that death was due to poison. There was, however, apparently a difficulty in testifying as to whether they had each of them taken poison voluntarily, or whether one had administered it to the other, and then taken it himself or herself. It was my friend the coroner who suggested this interesting conundrum concerning which there was no evidence ; but it took a firm hold of the minds of that jury, and they retired for quite a considerable time to consider their verdict, which they ultimately returned as follows :—

“We find that the bodies are those of the two people known hereabouts as Mr and Mrs Weeks. We find that the cause of death was poison. We find that one of the deceased administered the poison to the other and then

took it himself, or herself, but which of the two committed murder, and which suicide, we have no evidence to decide."

After some conversation with the coroner, the jury very reluctantly consented to alter the wording of this verdict into something more in accordance with the usual formula; but they were quite convinced that either Mr Weeks or Mrs Weeks should have a verdict of wilful murder returned against them. The coroner who lived at a county town at some distance took possession of the paper which was signed by the name of "Paul Kutoff," and I never heard that any further developments occurred to connect him either with the Russian Secret Police or anybody else.

No relatives were forthcoming to claim Mr Weeks' property; there was no will found, and very little money in the house. How they had obtained their means of livelihood remained a mystery. Certainly no further communications ever came from abroad, and it is just possible that there lay behind the apparently quiet life of this couple something more than came to my knowledge by visiting these two lunatics at home.

X

MORE LUNATICS

IN the second country district in which at one time I found myself practising I made the acquaintance of another gentleman, who was not only distinctly eccentric, but who, as a matter of fact, was actually an escaped lunatic. He was allowed to remain at large on account of his presumed harmlessness. Moreover, he was a clerical gentleman, and actually held the position of vicar in a small living in the district. Some years prior to the time of which I write he had gone out of his mind under circumstances of which I know nothing, had been certified as insane, and removed to a private asylum. After residing there for a year or two, however, he contrived to escape, and returned to his old parish. The living in the meantime had not been filled up, probably, I expect, because the income attached to it was not sufficient

to attract any one to accept it. It was something like sixty pounds a year. There was no vicarage, and on returning to the village, after his escape from the asylum, the reverend gentleman prevailed upon one of his old parishioners to allow him to take up his abode in his house.

He stated that he was now quite well, that he had been discharged cured, and that he proposed to reside once more in the village. I believe his whereabouts was kept quiet for a little while, at any rate long enough to make it necessary according to the law of England that he must be re-examined and re-certified before he could be again confined in an asylum. At the end of that time he appeared to be quite sensible, and also apparently it was nobody's business to ascertain as to whether he were really safe or otherwise, sane or insane, and so he was gradually allowed to take up his old position in the parish. It was at this stage of the proceedings that I became acquainted with the facts and himself.

By this time he had taken a little cottage for his own use, in which he lived alone, only attended by a man - of - all - work, who

seemed to act as cook, housemaid, gardener, and everything else. Before long, queer stories began to get about as to the eccentric doings of the parson, and it was whispered that in some moods he was not perfectly safe. Of his eccentricity there was certainly no doubt. Amongst other things he declined to allow any one to attend the church, although he held services in it quite regularly. At these services, however, no one was present except himself and the sexton, who was also his gardener. This good man, who was also a patient of mine, told me that the clergyman would go through the whole service from beginning to end, only making such necessary verbal alterations as made it quite clear that he was addressing simply one individual. For instance, instead of beginning as usual with "Dearly beloved brethren," he began, "Dearly beloved Prescott," and so on wherever necessary. The sexton, however, was unable to read, although he knew most of the responses off by heart. When it came, however, to negotiating the psalms for the day, the parson got over the difficulty of Prescott's illiteracy by simply reading every other verse.

Thus affairs went on for quite a number of years, uninterfered with by either bishop or people; but one hopes that such a state of things would not be allowed to happen at the present day. I write of many years ago.

I used to meet the eccentric parson at all hours of the day and night when on my rounds in the district. He seemed to spend most of the night wandering about in the most lonely places quite by himself, but never without a pretty formidable weapon of some kind; sometimes it would be a gun, at other times an axe, but always something; and it seemed to me that it was pretty obvious that sooner or later there would be trouble. I mentioned this fact to several of the leading residents, including a magistrate or two, and they quite agreed that probably there would be trouble, but apparently it was nobody's business to interfere until the trouble came. It did come ultimately; but before I mention it let me give three instances of my experience of the eccentricities of this lunatic at home.

One summer morning, about 3.30 A.M., I was returning home on horseback along a

very lonely road over the top of a hill, from a distant case which had kept me up during the night. I was very tired—the case had been a trying one—and was riding carelessly with the reins loose, allowing my horse to amble along at his own pace. Daybreak was just appearing, and the first streaks of golden sunlight lighted up the horizon. Suddenly there jumped out of the hedge, in front of my horse, my reverend and eccentric friend—this time with an axe on his arm. He stood straight in front of my horse, and I had to pull up. We exchanged morning greetings and a few commonplace remarks, and he was talking to me quite rationally, when suddenly a somewhat fierce expression came over him, and he pointed with his hand to the magnificent panorama of scenery which lay all round us, a scene which embraced three or four counties, and was of great beauty.

“Do you see all that, doctor?” indicating the distant scene with a sweep of his arm.

“Yes,” I replied; “I see it, and very beautiful it is.”

“Glorious, is it not?” he said, “simply glorious. It all belongs to me, you know,

every acre of it, and if you deny it, I will brain you."

I entirely agreed with him that the whole district, as far as he could see, and as much



"I WILL BRAIN YOU."

further as he liked, was entirely at his disposal, and, tightening my reins, I gave my horse a sharp touch of the whip, said good-morning to the clergyman, and left him

standing somewhat surprised, I expect, at my abrupt departure. It seemed to me, however, that the time had come when that conversation might very well be stopped.

The next incident in which I was mixed up with him was even more alarming, though not without its humorous aspect also. Again, it was very early morning, just daylight, but on this occasion I was asleep in bed in my own home. I was aroused by the barking of my dog who always slept in the hall by the front door, and who generally informed me of the arrival of a patient before the bell rang. Immediately I awoke I heard footsteps on the gravel approaching the front door, and then the bell. I jumped out of bed, and put my head out of the window to speak to the person, whoever he might be, as I usually did before going downstairs. To my astonishment I saw, standing outside, my reverend eccentric — this time with his gun.

He heard me open the window, and stepped back a few paces apparently so that he could get a clearer view.

“Is that you, Dr Oston?” he called out.

"Yes," I said. "Good-morning! Is there anything the matter?"

"Oh no," he replied in the blindest of tones; "nothing much at all. I only called to inform you that it has been revealed to me that I must shoot you."

He said this as if he were inviting me to supper, and without a trace of excitement or irritation in his manner.

"Would you mind coming down at once?" he continued. "It's rather chilly standing here, and I have a lot to do to-night."

The situation was rather unpleasant. I knew perfectly well that unless I could deal with him with sufficient tact to keep him in his present quiet condition, there might easily be serious trouble in which I should probably come off second best. I turned the situation over in my mind as quickly as possible, but apparently not quickly enough for him, because he again gave me his invitation to descend, and this time with a trace of irritation. I determined to try what the power of suggestion with a new idea would do, and so speaking as cheerfully as I could, I spoke to him out of the window.

"Certainly, by all means. It's very good of you to take the trouble, but don't you think, now, on second thoughts, it would be much better if I were to call upon you to-morrow morning and let us settle this matter comfortably. Suppose I come round about ten o'clock or so?"

It was a risky stroke, but it came off.

"Well, now I come to think of it," he replied, "I believe that was the plan. Yes, I am almost certain it was. How stupid of me! I am sorry I disturbed you in the night, doctor. Most inconsiderate! Good - night! Good-night!"

So saying, he turned without another word and walked straight down the drive out of my garden.

Of course it might just as well have happened that, instead of accepting my suggestion, he had discharged both barrels of his gun at my head, presuming that they were loaded. I need not say that I forgot to keep that engagement next morning; but I did report the circumstances to the authorities, who, moreover, took no action whatever.

On another occasion, I was attending a

parishioner of his who was very seriously ill ; she was one of the few people in the village whom he used to visit, and he had been extremely kind during her illness in supplying her with many little delicacies. At the same time he was rather a nuisance. She was much too ill to be worried with the strain of his visits. Moreover, he would insist upon opening the window wide, even though the weather was bitter, and the patient hardly strong enough to stand it. In other little ways he was rather a trial during this case.

One day I had been seeing this good lady, and she was so ill that I deemed it necessary to state that should the parson call he was not to see her. He did call soon after I left the house, and in spite of my instructions insisted upon paying a visit to the sick-room. When he reached the bedside the patient was either so feeble as to be unable to take any notice of his presence, or else deliberately made no sign—I don't know which—so that he jumped to the conclusion that she had departed this world, and immediately left the room exclaiming that she was dead.

There was a custom in that village, as there

is in many English villages, of tolling the church bell on the occasion of the death of any local person, the number of strokes tolled corresponding to the age of the person who had died. On this afternoon, shortly after I had reached home, I was astonished to hear the church bell beginning to toll; astonished, because the only person who was dangerously ill in the village, as far as I knew, was the patient whom I had just left, and whose death, ill as she was, I was not anticipating. I, therefore, sent the coachman down to enquire from the sexton for whom the bell was tolling, and to my astonishment he returned with the information that it was no other than this lady.

"I don't believe it," I said when he told me. "However, we will go and see."

"It's the parson who's done it," said the coachman; "he was up there just after you left, and he says she's dead."

"Well, he may be right," I replied, "but still I have my doubts."

I returned to the house, and found that the people had actually taken his word for it. They had pulled down all the blinds, closed up the room, and left the patient alone. I

went in and discovered, as I expected, that she was lying excessively weak, but still perfectly alive. I informed them of the fact, and had some difficulty in convincing them that I was the better judge in the circumstances than the parson.

As a matter of fact the good lady pulled through that illness, and when I left the district was perfectly well. The parson, however, insisted upon regarding her as dead, and never under any circumstances would he willingly see her again, and if he met her always ignored her presence. He said he had seen her after death, that was enough for him.

It was only after something really serious did happen that his career as a free gentleman came to an end, and that was a considerable time after the incident just related. In the meantime, I had spoken to his manservant concerning the danger of trusting his master with a gun, but I was told that he was very careful to see that the cartridges he had were all blank ones. I pointed out, however, that some of these lunatics are extremely cunning, and that he would be wise not to rely too

much upon that ; and the event proved I was right, for on one eventful evening the clergyman, without any provocation whatever, discharged both barrels at his faithful sexton from the top of his staircase. He might easily have killed him, but, as a matter of fact, the shot—for the cartridges were not blank on this occasion — landed in a muscle, and though tearing the flesh considerably, did not vitally damage.

The sexton rushed out of the house, bleeding profusely, and informed the police. Then I was sent for. His reverence, however, in the meantime had realised that he had done something serious at last, and promptly barricaded himself within the house, took up his position at a window commanding the approach, and with gun in hand, and a supply of ammunition beside him, prepared to defend his castle against all assaults. He meant to do it, too, because on the first appearance of the constable within range the parson immediately opened fire and gained a complete victory, the enemy retiring with discretion. I need not say that it was not very long before the whole village turned out to see the

excitement. Nobody, however, ventured much nearer than a hundred yards, and whenever they did they were promptly bombarded. As I say, the situation had its comic side, but it speedily developed into one which was too complicated for the local constable to deal with, and reinforcements were sent for from the nearest town. It actually took rather more than two days to dislodge my friend from his stronghold, and even then success was only attained by strategy. An entry was made at the back of his house, while he was kept busy in front by a demonstration of force, and after a tremendous struggle he was overpowered and taken prisoner.

In due course he was brought to trial, and then, of course, what happened was what should have been done long before. He was represented by a counsel who pleaded that he was not responsible for his actions and the poor fellow was once more detained during Her Majesty's pleasure. As far as I know he never regained his liberty, and I never heard of him again.

XI

A PATHETIC DOCUMENT

ONE of the very few houses in the village unoccupied by old or ordinary residents was Myrtle Lodge; a pretty dwelling which stood by itself in a garden, and having an orchard of about an acre. It was owned by some trustees, and usually let for the summer to visitors; and the tenants were frequently recommended by a doctor in a neighbouring town, and came for rest and quietness and a simple healthy country life. Not uncommonly they had a letter of introduction to myself, but whether this were the case or not they became my patients as a matter of course.

One summer there came to Myrtle Lodge a middle-aged gentleman and his only daughter Marjorie. We soon became intimate both socially and professionally, and both Mr Fipps and Marjorie were welcome visitors at my house. He was a schoolmaster whose ill

health had compelled him to give up scholastic work, and he had been recommended to try our village as a spot suitable to his restricted means, and as a salubrious locality.

Mr Fipps' advent was a godsend to me, for he was a man of great ability and mental energy, and such companions were rare.

In my capacity as medical attendant I soon ascertained that Mr Fipps' life was a very uncertain one. He was the victim of one of those forms of cardiac and vascular disease extremely difficult to diagnose exactly, but whose presence made itself obvious at times by somewhat alarming, if vague, symptoms. As a rule Mr Fipps was very cheerful and of a happy disposition; occasionally, however, he was liable to fits of deep depression and melancholy, and these commonly followed some attack of a cardiac nature which seemed to leave him for the time being mentally prostrate. His depression was due rather to his dread of leaving Marjorie alone and unprotected in the world, and ill provided for, than to any fear or dread of death for himself.

Of his former private and family history he

never spoke to me, except as regards his professional work, in which he had taken a keen and scientific interest. His wife he never mentioned at all—no reference to her ever passed his lips to me. I suspected some sorrow too deep for words, but knew nothing.

Of his own possible, and indeed probable, sudden death at some unknown moment in the future, and of the manner of the end, he spoke often, and indeed it seemed to me as if he did so with a view of accustoming himself to the idea, and of becoming reconciled to it. Certainly, as a rule, he appeared happy and content with his simple life. To Marjorie he never complained, nor would he allow her young life to be clouded by the knowledge of the precarious tenure upon which he held his own. As regards this girl he frequently enjoined silence upon me as to his own physical health, arguing that as he might live for years it would be cruel to submit her to a daily anxiety which could do no good. I agreed. He knew that he might live for some years, and that, on the other hand, the end might come at any time—human knowledge could not foretell exactly.

Mr Fipps and Marjorie stayed at Myrtle Lodge during the whole of one summer, and in the late autumn proposed to return to the town for the winter months. Shortly before the time for their departure was due he sent for me one evening, saying that he would like a quiet, confidential chat if I could spare the time. When we found ourselves alone and likely to be undisturbed he began a conversation, some parts of which have remained very clearly in my memory to this day. We had been speaking of himself and his future arrangements.

“Do you ever think of death, doctor?” he asked.

“My work naturally brings me into close contact with death almost daily; I am face to face with it only too often,” I replied.

“Ah no, I don’t mean that,” he answered. “That is not thinking of death, to my mind. It is merely taking a strong professional interest in a desperate material struggle which is going on between opposing forces, a struggle in which your services and skill are engaged upon one side against an enemy. You are interested to win. But when you lose — as

you do sometimes in spite of every care—do you ever think of what it means to your patient? Do you ever think of death in that way? Do you ever think of death as it would affect yourself, for instance, if it came?"

"Not often, I confess," I said. "Medical men get accustomed to the fact of death as an ever-present reality, and I suppose that very familiarity breeds a sort of contempt for death itself, so that it hardly looms so large or so awful in our minds as it does in those to whom it is a far more rare visitor."

"I suppose that must be it," Mr Fipps went on; "and indeed it is a good thing it is so, otherwise it would be hardly possible for you medical men to do the work you do. You could not be the cheerful comforters in times of sickness and trouble that most of you are—thank God—unless you deliberately, or by force of habit, ignored the possibilities in every serious case."

"We don't ignore the possibility," I answered; "on the contrary, it is ever before us in serious cases."

"In one sense it doubtless is," he replied, "but not in another. The possibility of the

failure of your treatment to secure your object ; the possibility of the cessation of functioning, of physiological metabolism—these things are before you, doubtless—but of what death may mean—is that in your mind, do you think ?”

“You mean the metaphysical possibilities, the psychological or spiritual possibilities, or whatever one may term them.”

“Yes, the significance of the event to the person to whom it happens—to the personality.”

“Ah, that is different, as you say. Well, no, I don’t think that aspect does enter very much into my thoughts. You know how unsatisfying and even irritating to some minds is speculating on meagre data.”

“Yes, I entirely appreciate that, and I know that it applies forcibly to men who have had your mental training. It seems a futile train of thought to you, because the usual dogmas uttered about death by so-called orthodox persons mean little or nothing to you, and no other definite conception has taken their place. Is it not so ?”

“More or less, I daresay, that is true of many of us,” I replied. “I myself have no very clear convictions of the after-world, apart

from a firm general conviction that the whole universe moves on in order to some good purpose. I don't know that I could advance much evidence even of that, I simply think so as a student of evolution."

"But what of personality, doctor?—that is the all-important point."

"You mean—what of the persistence and survival of personality after death?" I queried.

"Yes," he replied; "surely that is the most absorbing of all questions."

Now, although as a matter of fact I had thought much on this matter myself, and had in my own mind some sort of conception as to the destination of personality, I was not prepared to put it into words offhand; and, moreover, I got the impression that Mr Fipps really wanted to tell me his own ideas rather than to listen to mine. So I replied:

"Yes, indeed. What do you think yourself?"

"Well, if you would like to hear my thought about it, you shall," he replied; "I should like to know whether it appeals to your mind."

"Let me hear it, by all means," I said.

"Language is necessarily too restricted to express adequately one's thoughts of the

infinite," he began, "and hence it is most difficult to find words to clothe thoughts themselves somewhat vague. But it seems to me unreasonable to think that personality ends altogether and in every form at death. Such a result appears an inadequate explanation of all that has gone before,—it appears to make life itself of so little account, almost a very bad joke, in fact. I therefore reject the thought of the entire annihilation of personality merely because what we now call life ceases.

"I don't reject that idea merely on account of the general and very natural *desire* to think one's personality and that of one's friends must survive in some way, but because, as I say, it seems so unreasonable to think it is utterly lost; and, the rest of the world being arranged to our minds on reasonable working of fixed laws, it would seem to me to follow that the development of personality must do likewise. Some place must be found for it in the scheme of things.

"I find it difficult to conceive," he continued, "that where all is evolution and progress, or degeneration and reversion, this ego, which

we call personality—that which makes you yourself and me myself—can possibly persist after death unchanged. I cannot imagine *myself*, that is, nor *yourself*, remaining as such for ever, as old dogma would have it. That is as hard to imagine as is the extinction of self. Moreover, there is a very real kind of personal immortality with which we are all familiar, the immortality of personal influence, which indeed seems often to grow with time rather than to diminish. Whether it grows or diminishes would appear to depend on what would be termed the personality here in this present life. What I mean is this. Take the case of those whom we have known ourselves; our own dear ones. Does their personality cease to exist for us simply because what we term death has come to pass? Surely not. I know in my own case the personalities of my mother, and to a less extent that of my father, and to a greater extent that of another person—are more real to me now than they were during the lifetimes of those people. Their influence is not gone, but still active and acting. Take the personality of well-known men and women in the world's

history. Take Shakespeare. Take Christ. Did their personality—as a simple matter of fact—cease to exist?

“Take any of the great teachers and prophets of the world. Did they cease to exist at their deaths? And, if not, what was it that continued? Obviously, their personality. Nothing else. Those personalities in some instances are greater to-day, judged by the influence they wield over men, than they ever were during the lifetimes of the individuals. Personality is therefore immortal.”

“But what of lesser personalities, those of people who had little or no influence when alive?” I asked.

“I take it that it must be a simple matter of degree. The degree of persistence of personality must be proportionate to the power of the personality. That is to say, some are more immortal than others, live longer as separate personalities. I see your difficulty, I think. You mean what becomes of a very obscure personality, one which has little or no influence outside its own immediate or family sphere?”

“Yes,” I said; “that is my difficulty in your view.”

“ I don't think it presents any real difficulty, but it does present a view which many would find unacceptable, perhaps. It would seem to involve the thought of a dispersal of the real essence of life itself into the common fund, so to speak. It is hard to express exactly, and I don't know whether I make myself clear. I mean that the very ordinary person of no outstanding influence, who is soon forgotten even by those who knew him best, and who ceases to be any influence at all soon after his death, cannot be said to have any immortality as far as this life is concerned. Nevertheless, he was a personality of a kind at one time, however obscure, and had his influence upon others, however slight it may have been. It appears to me, therefore, that whatever that power or force was which made him a personality at all, it is probably diffused into the general source from which all such force comes. Such a view would give one some idea of the way in which such vital force is conserved, and would make personal immortality—the persistence of personality, that is—a conditional thing—a matter of degree. In that sense we are all personally immortal in a way, but in most of us

our personality merges in that of humanity in general because it is not of such outstanding power that it can persist of itself. It is exactly comparable to the inheritance of other qualities. General tendencies and capacities are inherited by all, but it is only the well-marked variations which one can see to be selected for separate preservation."

"I think I follow you," I said. "You conceive that there is a certain amount of something which we may call in our inadequate terminology—the vital force, emanating from some Great First Cause ; that this in-ordinary personalities is sufficient to make them appear distinctive for a time, but insufficient to persist as such ; that after death this spreads itself over the world, so to speak, and is absorbed—here a little and there a little—so that the sum total remains the same and nothing is lost, but that it is no longer an entity in itself. Is that it?"

"Exactly ; as far as one can phrase such a thought exactly," he replied.

"It would seem to me to follow," I continued, "that even on this supposition personality remains, because, however small its influence, that influence must leave its mark upon the

personalities of others with whom it came in contact, and thus persist for ever."

"Yes, I agree," said Mr Fipps. "In that sense only, possibly, are all our personalities persistent."

"It is an interesting thought," I said, "and one which suggests some fascinating speculations. What made you formulate it in your own mind first of all?"

"The knowledge that sooner or later my own life would terminate suddenly," he replied. "It seems so difficult to imagine what we call personality ceasing in a moment, as does what we term life. It does not appear to depend upon exactly the same factors, though, of course, the manifestation of personality is usually associated with a physical appearance in the popular mind. Still, the simple fact that personal influence persists in this present world after the death of the individual proves at once that personality is independent of life. Naturally, in my own case, I wondered what would happen to my personality at the moment of my death, and afterwards. I have been so influenced myself by the personality of one who died, that I wondered if my own

personality would survive in as marked a manner."

"Who was that?" I asked carelessly.

Mr Fipps hesitated a moment, and by his expression I saw that I had touched a tender spot.

"I beg your pardon," I said; "I did not think that my question might be a painful one. Don't answer it."

"All right, doctor," he replied, "you have given no offence; nothing you could say would do that. Only the memory is a painful one. I'll tell you some day—not just now."

"Don't think of it," I said; "let us talk of something else."

"I have meant to tell you for a long time, doctor, but I find it hard. It is the tragedy of my life, and it concerns a woman."

"You shall tell me when you feel inclined, when you can do so without giving yourself pain, but not if the telling gives you distress."

"It would be a relief to talk it out with you, the only friend I have; but I am one of those men who find it hard to put into words the things which affect me most. Perhaps many men find that. I think I could write it better.

May I write it for you? Will you read it if I do?"

"Certainly, if you wish it," I replied.

"Then I will write it. I should like to think you knew all about it. But I shall not write it till I leave here, and probably shall not let it come into your hands till after my death. If I do that you will treat it as a manuscript that you have encountered in any ordinary way, according as it interests you or otherwise."

We talked then of less personal things, of his impending departure, of the probability of his returning the following year, of the chances of my own future, and so forth. It was late when I bade him good-night, and that was the last intimate conversation we had together. A few weeks later he left. But he kept his word.

As events turned out I never saw Mr Fipps alive again after he left the village and Myrtle Lodge, though he wrote to me at intervals. He told me he felt himself failing in health, though not obviously worse. He complained of a sense of impending death at times, and foretold that he would not live much longer. He never came back to Myrtle Lodge, but

took a little cottage at the seaside for the next summer, where he could indulge in his favourite relaxation of sea-fishing, which occupied his days pleasantly without necessitating physical exertion.

For two successive years I heard from him from this place, and then he wrote to say that his greatest anxiety had been removed. His beloved Marjorie, now nineteen years old, had become engaged to be married, and her future happiness seemed as safe as anything could be in that way. He headed this letter, I remember, "*Nunc dimittis.*"

And then, soon afterwards, came his death. The news of the sad event reached me through the medium of the daily press ; for the peculiarly sad circumstances had attracted notice and gained publication. In a day or two they were amplified by a sweet but sad letter to myself from Marjorie, telling me the details.

It appeared that Mr Fipps had been in the habit of rowing out some distance into the bay in front of his cottage whenever the evening was suitable from the weather point of view. At a distance of half a mile or so, where his boat could be clearly seen, he would anchor

and spend many hours fishing. Apparently he loved being there, for he cared but little whether he were successful or not. On this particular evening he was left alone at home, Marjorie having gone to spend a day or two with her future husband's family not far away. Mr Fipps had told her that he would go fishing as usual. He had been seen to row out quietly into the bay, but no one saw him return. This was not particularly remarked, because there were but few people about, and those who were knew that he frequently stayed out in his boat till very late at night.

On the afternoon of the following day Marjorie returning home was surprised to find him out, and the house empty. Looking out to sea she could distinctly see his boat and himself in it. She waited some time, thinking he would soon return. As he did not she resorted to certain signals which they had arranged between them to indicate that one or the other were in the house, or that meals were ready, and so forth. But there was no response from the boat. Enquiry from the two or three neighbouring houses elicited the fact that Mr Fipps had not been seen

ashore that day, and then Marjorie became alarmed.

Another boat was obtained, and in a few minutes the occupants found Mr Fipps alone in his boat, the anchor down, his fishing-line still in hand, but he himself gone to his long rest. He appeared to be in a peaceful sleep, and death had evidently come to him unawares and without a struggle.

Reverently and slowly they towed him home in his boat, and a day or two later, after all was over, Marjorie wrote me these details, and enclosed a packet which she said she found amongst his few papers addressed to myself, and inscribed, "To be sent to my friend Dr Oston after my death."

It was a pathetic document, but there are some thoughts in it which may well give one pause, and I leave it to speak for itself to my readers. It ran as follows :

"By the time this manuscript reaches your hands, my dear doctor, I shall be no longer living, and shall have solved the problem of one of our discussions—that of the continuation of personality, if it be solved at death.

"I promised that some day I would tell you in writing what I could not bring myself to

relate. Here is my story, so far as I have one. There is only one part of my history which would interest you, namely, that which relates to the starvation and atrophy of my soul. Let me say at once that Marjorie is not my daughter. I was never married; I loved but once, and that too well, and that love spoilt my life. I do not agree that it is better to have loved and lost—at least not for some natures, because love once lost may be an eternal loss. It was so with me. After the tragedy of my love, when my soul was starving for comfort, by a strange sequence of events I was enabled to adopt Marjorie as my daughter, and to lavish upon her all that was left of my capacity for affection. I never regretted it. Her love was the one bright spot in my life, and though it could not quite be all that a wife's could have been, it prevented me from falling to unknown mental depths.

“During the whole of my life I have known the ecstatic bliss of a woman's love for just four hours! Perhaps I should be thankful for so much,—I am, in one sense; but it would have been easier to have lived without that experience than with its loss.

“She was training for the teaching profession as I was. We met in congenial and mutual study and work. Our minds seemed to harmonise in an unusual degree, and hence we were mutually attracted. On my part the companionship rapidly developed into a love,

and from all that I could judge she responded to my affection. Poor girl ; I believe she tried her best to be my lover—but found it at last too difficult a task. And so it flickered out as spontaneously as it arose. Indeed, it is quite clear to me now, looking back upon that week, that the love I imagined never existed for her at all.

“That week came towards the end of a term of study when we were about to separate for a vacation. We had got into the habit of meeting frequently apart from classes, of corresponding almost daily upon topics of every kind which presented problems of mutual interest, and her evident delight in my friendship deceived me into thinking that her feelings for me were similar to mine for her. At last one day I spoke to her plainly, and told her of my love. It was then that she made her mistake. I see it now. She did not know or did not realise what it meant, and she did her best to play a part for which she was not fitted. I was deceived absolutely, and in the bliss of her acceptance of the situation it never occurred to me that the love was all on my side.

“For four successive days that week we met as lovers, and lived the lover’s paradise of dreams. She did her best, I verily believe, to love me then. No lover’s claim was too importunate for her to grant—for those four days, of one hour each. Her arms were about my neck ; the scent of her hair intoxicates me

still when I think of it—and I cannot forget it ; her full, warm lips met mine again and again in long-drawn kisses ; her very breath mingled with mine—my God ! how could I tell she did not love me ?

“ There was nothing that I could have asked of her during those four hours which she would not have given me,—and yet at the end of it she found she was not being true to herself. Only the day before she had whispered, ‘ Teach me to be more demonstrative,’ but I might have known that there should have been no need of teaching. Perhaps it was as well for both of us, or at any rate for her, that I discovered before it went further that it was too hard for her, and that she was doing her best to persuade herself when she was really acting unconsciously a part, rather than spoil my ideal or dispel my dream.

“ Something happened or was said—I forget which or what—on the last of those four days. Whatever it was it impelled me to ask her to simply say one word if she desired to be free from her promise. At that very moment she was in my arms and yielding softly to my embrace. I anticipated that her reply would be a lover’s passionate exclamation. Instead of that she heaved a sigh of relief, and slowly disengaged her arms from about my neck.

“ That sigh was the beginning of the cruellest and most painful half-hour I have

ever spent on earth. Suddenly she made me realise by hints rather than words that she would like to be free from her promise. She made me feel that in her inmost heart she wished it — that she had not realised what it meant when she said she would be my lover and future wife, and that she had undertaken more than she could willingly carry out. But little was said, and she begged for another day before she decided. She would meet me to-morrow as usual and tell me her mind.

“With that we parted, and my soul despaired.

“During the long hours in which I waited for her to come, I hoped against hope and my reason, and prayed—if ever man prayed—that I were mistaken, and that she should refuse my offer of freedom. But her attitude of relief had been unmistakable, and I knew in my heart of hearts that my hope was vain. O Fickleness—truly thy name is woman! Only two short days before and she had pledged herself again and again to me, and now, apparently, already she repented of her word. Does a woman ever think, I wonder, of what such a thing means to a man? Does it ever occur to her that no faith is proof against blows of that sort? I was under no delusion about her. I knew her for what she was — a pure, good, religious English lady, the highest and best that humanity has to offer as its justification. And this woman of strong character and great ability had fancied for four

hours that she would like to be mine—and acted accordingly. Then she thought otherwise! If such a woman acts in such a manner, what is a man to think of her sex as a whole, not one in a thousand of whom have a tithe of her strength of character—as her career since has abundantly shown.

“I do not blame her. I do not judge her. Very likely she was right. Only that does not alter the result to me. My ideal was shattered, my dream—remained a dream which can never be realised.

“She did not come that day. She sent a line to say she felt she had made a mistake, that she felt she wanted a wider sphere of life than she would have with me, and that she could not trust her life to me.

“What a mockery of fate! It was just six years since I had tried to formulate in my own mind the conditions under which such a love might come about. Every day since I had before me the possibility of the realisation of the idea. It came—as I thought! All the circumstances exactly fitted the conditions which I had imagined necessary and advisable. What wonder that I fell into the trap set by a malicious destiny and offered a great love where none was wanted! What wonder that a kind companion tried to make herself accept it rather than wound me! And what wonder that she failed either to trust or to understand me!

“Yes! That was the bitterness of it. She could not trust her life to me. It would not be safe. It might take on lines she did not wish, and might result in plans being hindered. She would be friends still, but we must not show it outwardly even to each other! Did she think my heart was of flint? Goodness only knows what a woman does think. The writer who said that a woman never trusted a man who was unceasingly and unflinchingly kind, knew more about the sex than I gave him (or was it her?) credit for when I read the phrase. Is it true of all women, I wonder? If so, I can imagine no sadder truth in the world of sex relationship. And then, poor blind fool that I was, I had tried to be kind all the time I had known her, little thinking that was the way to breed distrust.

“Ah well! It was all over. For four short hours she had been my love. As near as I can surmise I had been hers for a few minutes. But she can never take from me the memory of those brief hours, nor do I think she would wish to do so. That is all I have had in my life of the nutriment of love, but she cannot prevent me loving the idea of which she was for those few brief hours the actual embodiment. But why, O why in heaven’s name was it necessary that it must be in vain?

“When it was all over, when she had regained her freedom and expressed her relief in the position, she then—then of all times—

began to write to me and question me on all my most private convictions. She wanted to know what I thought about everything—life, death, heaven, hell, creed, and every other subject upon which a man who feels deeply finds it hard to speak. How I would have welcomed this under other circumstances; it is one of the delights that a love should make possible. But now—O my lost love, where was the fairness in first of all making it impossible for me to speak freely and then approaching such topics? Did she think I should enjoy some hours of mental gymnastics with her? Of course, from the moment that I made it plain I could not bare my soul in that way except she loved me, I began to fall in her estimation. I saw it all, and suffered agonies. She could not understand me, and so I was forced to sign my own death warrant as far as her friendship went, and what she thinks of me now I know not, and she refuses me the right to care. At least I tried to be honest, and to spare her all I could. Possibly I was over-anxious on this account, for what was bitter pain to me was a relief to her. That she should still think she had the right to dissect my thoughts while she withheld her love is one of those things which only a woman could imagine. No man would demand such confidence on such conditions.

“Vanity of vanities, said the cynical and sceptical preacher who had tried it. Truly

most of life is vanity indeed. I suppose there *must* be some great purpose in it all; one must think so if one is to remain sane. But whatever the scheme, the *individuals* concerned are obviously merely the atoms concerned in the production of some great and grand chemical precipitate, and the fact that they perish in the process is neither here nor there. Only it is disappointing for the atoms. Nor does it matter that one should be numbered amongst the atoms of failures,—but it is hard to fail where one loves.

“You probably cannot realise in the least what love means to a man like myself. Do you know that there are some men of whom it is not true to say that love is of their life a thing apart—that to some men it is their whole existence? There are some men like that. I was one. My nature and temperament was built to love and for love, and could not grow save under love’s influence and nutrition. It is a question of a capacity. This is partly inborn and partly acquired by environment. In my own nature there was and is a strong inborn tendency to give and receive all that the idea of perfect love involves, and it is merely my misfortune that the natures with whom I was thrown in contact at the critical period of development, were lacking in some of that capacity which alone could have enabled them to respond. Thus my own capacity remained more or less

undeveloped, wanting the free scope and nutrition in environment from which alone it could attain in time its own full measure.

“We do not realise the great truth that souls and bodies alike develop and grow in response to the same kind of agencies and stimuli—the stimuli of nutrition, exercise, and injury. All inborn capacities depend upon these factors for their future, and vary in their ultimate nature with the nature and proportion of each. The purely physical characters, as well as what we term non-physical traits, cannot come to maturity except on these lines. But while we see and recognise this in the physical characters we fail to observe that full many a *Soul* remains *in embryo* for lack of the specific nutrition and exercise, those conditions of its environment which alone can bring it to maturity. On the other hand, too often the soul is dwarfed and crippled by the injuries it receives or the starvation meted out to it.

“So it has been with me. It is in the highest degree improbable, if not impossible, that in the short span of life left to me, another opportunity will be afforded for my soul-growth; and even if it were, the consciousness of failure in the first case would almost certainly preclude my giving myself a second chance. The dread of a repetition would be overwhelming. So that the result comes to be, that, should the second opportunity arise—I myself will be the cause of preventing the development of the soul-

faculty in another, because in me there is no longer any capacity to respond. One can only hope that in such case one is forgiven inasmuch as one knows not what one does.

“And yet—and yet, if only the sense of painful loss were less acute, it would be easier to bear. The sense of loss irrevocable—it is that which hurts. We could have been so much to each other, helped each other in so many varied ways. At least that is my pain and loss, for she could have helped me where I most needed help—in the growth of my soul. She could have given me that which I could never have repaid except by love and gratitude, and when ‘gratitude is bankrupt only Love can pay his debts.’ But love does pay them, to the full, and with compound interest where it exists in fullest purity and scope, so that it is easy to make the debt appear to be transferred to the other side of the account. But that this should happen it was necessary that she allowed me to do all I could for her, and this right of service she was unwilling to allow. To that phase of love she was insusceptible.

“Well might that profound searcher of human souls, Oliver Wendell Holmes, write:—‘The great mystery of God’s Providence is the permitted crushing out of flowering instincts. There comes a time when the souls of human beings . . . begin to faint for the atmosphere they were made to breathe. Then it is that Society places its transparent bell-glass over the young person

who is to be the subject of one of its fatal experiments. The element by which only the heart lives is sucked out of its crystalline prison. Watch through the transparent walls:—the bosom is heaving, but it is in a vacuum. Death is no riddle compared to this.'

"Death—compared to this! How infinitely less to be dreaded! No riddle indeed in comparison. The one thought holds the hopelessness of despair, unless the other is the solution.

"And so it ended—my brief dream of love and life! Four hours of love—and all eternity a blank! Only just long enough to give me memories of moments, and visions of the might-have-been. Not that I would be without the memories, though they leave the soul-hunger unsatisfied. She could not trust me then, but perchance some day the consciousness may come to her that she might have done. Some day she will realise that 'Faith always implies the disbelief of a lesser fact in favour of a greater,' and whatever happens—for four hours she was my own."

.

The pathetic document of Mr Fipps ended abruptly here. I give it just as it was given to me, and make no comment. I fancy that only those who have passed through some such experience as his will be able to enter

into all that it suggests. For myself, I can only say that it makes clearer to me much that I formerly never understood in the character of my patient, whose life went out so quietly with the ebbing tide.

XII

A ROMANY LASS

CURIOS coincidences, as well as queer patients, occasionally come under a doctor's notice. The following is an example from my own experience.

The story divides itself naturally into two parts, with an interval between them of some ten or twelve years.

The first part begins in a scene of our student days. A travelling show of some sort was visiting the city, and amongst the varied attractions offered to interest the public was a gipsy caravan, the occupants of which advertised their willingness to tell the fortunes of all and sundry—for a consideration. Along with a student friend, I visited the show one evening, and, acting on the impulse of the moment, suddenly decided to have my fortune told by the gipsies. If the truth must be told, I think this decision was really arrived at by

a glimpse of what seemed to be an extremely fascinating little gipsy girl inside the caravan. My friend refused to accompany me, so I mounted the steps alone and entered.

The van was divided into two parts by a curtain hung across the middle, and to my intense disappointment the fascinating gipsy disappeared behind the curtain, and a very old and wrinkled woman came forward and requested me to take a seat.

I told her I wanted my fortune told. She began in the usual way, gave me the usual vague information, none of which was very startling, and after a few moments, looked towards the curtain. "Cora! Come and tell the gentleman his fortune," she cried.

So saying, she herself retired, and my fascinating gipsy made her appearance.

To this day, I remember exactly how she looked. I suppose I was a very susceptible youth at that time, but certainly Cora made a great impression upon me. She was a beautiful girl in both features and figure, with lovely eyes and hair, and—what struck me most—with the tiniest of hands and feet. How some trifles do stick in one's memory!

Her whole appearance, attitude and expression seemed to me to be those of an educated lady. I think so still!

Taking my left hand in her right, she gazed at it intently for a few moments, and then looked right through me with those wonderful eyes of hers. "Will you please cross my hand with silver?" she said.

I gave her half a crown. If she had said gold, at that moment, I would have made it a sovereign.

"You don't come from these parts," she observed.

"How do you know?" I asked.

"Oh," she answered with a smile, "six-pence is about the limit, as a rule, in this show. The half-crowns come only when we are in drawing-rooms, or sometimes at a bazaar."

"Well, never mind!" I said. "You are quite right. Now tell me all you can."

Either out of her good nature, or gratitude for mercies received, Cora painted a future for me, which I am bound to say I have hardly lived up to, and then, after carefully warning me to avoid some person who was going to call upon me on the 10th of the next month,

she asked me to concentrate my attention on some definite wish for my own future.

I did so, and I remember, with vivid distinctness, exactly what I wished, and how I framed the wish in my own mind.

Then, taking my hand again, she looked at my face. "You did not wish for riches," she said; "and it is well you did not, for you will never be rich, but you will get your wish all the same, and before long. When that happens, remember I told you so. Now, good-night, I must go."

I shook hands with her. "Good-bye," I said; "but before I go would you grant me one favour?"

"Certainly, I will," she replied. "What is it?"

"Tell me your name," I asked, "if you don't mind."

She hesitated for a moment. "If you will call me Cora," she said, "it will suffice for our next meeting." With that she disappeared behind the screen, and as she did so, I took off my hat. For the life of me, I could not help it.

I found my companion outside, very anxious

to know everything that had transpired. I am afraid I gave him a somewhat garbled version of the proceedings, and suggested that he should go and try his luck also. This, however, he declined to do, and presently we left the show.

Time went on, and in due, or somewhat overdue, time I took my degree; travelled about the world for a time, and ultimately settled in the country practice to which I have alluded in some other pages. The incident of the gipsy and fortune-telling had long since passed out of my mind, and I am afraid that even the divine Cora herself had become a somewhat faint memory.

One night about 9 P.M.—a dark, cloudy, winter night—a man called at the surgery and asked for Dr Oston. I went to see him.

He was a perfect stranger to me.

“Are you Dr Oston?” was his abrupt greeting.

“I am,” I replied.

“Then, I was to give you this,” he went on, “but I was not to give it to any one but the doctor himself. If he was not here, I was simply to say that the doctor is wanted.”

"All right!" I said. "Don't worry, I am he."

He then handed me a note which bore my name in full. Opening it, I read the following lines :—

"DEAR DOCTOR,—I am in great trouble. Will you be so kind as to follow the messenger who has given you this, and come to my assistance?—Yours,
CORA."

I read the note again and again without realising in the least who was the sender. I asked my messenger who had sent him, but he declined to say a word.

"Have we far to go?" I asked, having made up my mind that I would attend to the message.

"No," he said. "If you will come with me, I will show you the way."

"Where is the house to which you want me to go?"

"I was to say nothing," he said, "but just bring you along."

"Very well," I said, "I will come."

Before I left the house, however, I took the precaution to ask my coachman to come

and sit inside until I returned, because I thought it was just possible that this was a little plan to get me out of the way, so that a mild burglary, or something of that kind, might be perpetrated in my absence. That had happened once, hence the precaution. However, I was quite wrong on this occasion, as the sequel will show.

My guide led the way through the village, and then turned to the right, down a steep hill, along an old, overgrown country lane as dark as pitch. I thought at first that he must have mistaken his way, because, as far as I knew, there were no houses, then occupied, to which it led. In fact, it ended suddenly about half a mile further on, in an old worked-out quarry. I asked him once if he knew where he was going, but not a word would he say. He certainly was the most discreet messenger I ever had.

We proceeded along this old lane, until I estimated in the darkness that we must be very near the quarry itself. Suddenly he stopped, and gave utterance to a peculiar whistling call. This was immediately answered by some one ahead of us, and presently there

emerged out of the darkness a second person carrying a lantern.

"Are you Dr Oston?" said this newcomer.

Once more I admitted identity.

"Then will you please come this way, sir," he said, leading me along for a few yards into a recess of the old quarry, where I was brought to the steps of a travelling caravan, and asked to go inside.

On opening the door, I found that it was well lighted. A striking scene presented itself.

Lying full length on the floor was a big, strong man who was bleeding profusely, apparently from wounds in the head. Huddled away in the one corner, I observed the figure of an old decrepit woman, wringing her hands, and moaning, "He's dead, he's dead, my poor boy, he's dead!" But the most striking figure of all—and her face for the moment I could not see—was apparently that of a well-dressed young lady who had thrown herself across the breast of the unconscious man, and who was weeping piteously.

She roused herself at my approach, turning

her anguished face to me. "Is that you, doctor? Thank God you've come! Is it too late?" she asked.

"I hope not," I said; "but let me see what has happened."



IN THE CARAVAN

I then proceeded to examine my patient, and soon discovered that he was suffering from three rather severe wounds upon the head,

none of which, however, in themselves were dangerous, and I concluded that, in the absence of other injuries, he had probably fainted from loss of blood.

Turning to the younger woman to inform her of my opinion, I then, and then only, recognised her as my fortune-teller of years before.

I did my best to allay her anxiety, and having stitched up the wounds and fixed the dressings, I asked Cora—for it was she—what had happened, and how she came to be there.

"I cannot tell you now, doctor," she said. "He is my husband; you shall know all in due time. Will he recover? You don't know how I love him!"

I told her that I thought that there was no need for great anxiety, but that I should like to see him again.

"I am afraid that is impossible," she said. "We must be far from here before the morning."

She would give me no further information, and with much regret I was forced to return home in the dark, literally, as well as metaphorically.

I went to bed turning over in my mind the extraordinary coincidence of this curious

meeting with Cora—my Romany lass—after all these years, and fell asleep wondering what and who she was, and what it all meant.

Next morning I woke to find the country in the grip of a snowstorm, and the snow already lying some inches deep. Immediately after breakfast I started off to the spot of my visit of the night before, but there was no trace of Cora nor of her caravan. They had disappeared absolutely.

I made some careful enquiries in the village, without saying anything which would commit them, but I could gain no information.

Several days passed, and I had once more come to the conclusion that the mystery of Cora would remain unsolved. At the end of the week, however, I found myself one evening sitting before the fire, reading the weekly newspaper which circulated in that part of the county, and which contained all the local news. My attention was drawn to a paragraph which ran as follows :—

“STARTLING POACHING AFFRAY

“Just as we go to press, news reaches us of a somewhat serious poaching affray which took place at an outlying portion of Lord ——’s

estate, early on Tuesday evening. It seems that two of his Lordship's keepers surprised a party of three of the light-fingered gentry, and that a free fight followed, during which the keepers got the worst of it, though none of them were seriously hurt. They said, however, that one of their assailants seemed seriously wounded, though he managed to escape with the help of his two companions. We understand that up to the present the police have no clue to their identity."

It immediately occurred to me that my patient in the caravan was none other than the wounded man here referred to. If that were the case, they must have crossed the country with great speed, because where I saw him was some seven or eight miles from the spot indicated. Of course the snowstorm following afterwards would easily account for the obliteration of their steps.

However, it was all cleared up about three weeks later, when to my great pleasure, in one sense, I received the following letter :—

"EPPING FOREST.

"DEAR DR OSTON,—I cannot tell you how happy I am to be able to report that my husband has now quite recovered. It is absolutely impossible for me to say anything

to you by way of thanks or gratitude for what you did on that awful night. It is, however, due to you to explain one or two facts, which I know I can rest secure you will never divulge.

"I occupy a very high position amongst our people, and my husband and myself were travelling to a distant part of the country to settle a dispute with a portion of our tribe. We were accompanied by our driver and another man, who, on the night you saw us, had gone off poaching. My husband had gone after them, and arrived only in time to take part in a rather serious scuffle, as the result of which he received the injuries you saw.

"I somehow have an idea that you would not like me to send you an adequate fee for what you did, but I should like to think that you understand, and that you recollect what has guided me in my choice of the amount I enclose. It is very unlikely that we shall ever meet again, but, believe me, you will never be forgotten by the Romany lass, CORA."

What do you think she enclosed? It was a postal order for half a crown! Then I remembered the details of the whole scene of years ago. I rather liked her subtle idea of thus balancing our mutual financial relationships.

The only person to whom I told the whole incident was my wife.

“What I should really like to know,” she said, when I ended my story, “is—when you had your fortune told by Cora in the caravan, what *did* you wish for?”

“Yes! I am sure you would like me to gratify your curiosity in that direction,” I replied. “But I shall not do so, except merely to tell you that I got my wish the very first time I asked for it, which was soon afterwards. Perhaps you can guess for yourself what it was.”

A delicate blush of slight self-consciousness rather seemed to indicate that the mystery was not entirely impenetrable.

XIII

THE LETTER "D"

I MUST confess that I should find some difficulty in classifying to the satisfaction of an examiner in medicine the case to which I am about to allude ; and I am very certain that no instruction given to me during any period of my medical curriculum gave me the least assistance in treating it. True, it is some little time—can it really be so many years?—since my *Alma mater* decided to take the responsibility of setting me loose amongst an unsuspecting public. Very possibly things are different now. In my time, however, it was not considered in the least necessary for a medical student—an embryo physician—to know anything about the psychology of the human mind. We were shown a few lunatics, certainly, and taught something of insanity with a view to acquiring the knowledge necessary to fill up a certificate which confines

a fellow-being to an asylum. But as for ministering to the human mind—short of the measures recommended to be adopted for lunatics, imbeciles, and idiots—that was not thought of. Patients were either mentally sane, or they were not, and there was an end of it. If sane—drugs; if insane—asylums. What more could one want?

None of us were very long in practice, however, before we found out that this simple scheme of things left something to be desired, especially in the way of treatment. We very soon were impressed with the fact that not all morbid thoughts were to be attributed to either actual lunacy or sluggish livers—that there were, in very truth, states of mind and ideation which had hitherto been undreamed of in our philosophy. And the worst of it was that we felt hopeless to advise in these cases. There was nothing in our pharmacopœia except “change of air and scene,” or a “sea voyage,” for such conditions. So we got into the habit of prescribing external remedies for internal conditions, not because we really thought they would do any good, but because we knew of nothing else that would.

I suppose all this is altered nowadays, and one can only envy the young modern physician who is taught scientifically to diagnose and treat the morbid psychology which so many cases present to his notice.

Our teachers, however, knew nothing of the power of suggestion, though all the successful ones amongst them were great, if unconscious, hypnotists. It was only after a period of study abroad that I learnt the only scientific manner of dealing with these curious states of mind. But what a flood of light that period threw upon much that had previously been obscure! One found hope and possibilities in place of despair.

One of these curious cases which came into my hands was that of a young lady whose mother came one morning to consult me by appointment. She gave her name as Mrs Fleat, and at once candidly told me that the name was assumed, and that she would rather not tell me her real name nor address.

"Before I can agree to anything so irregular," I replied, "will you be good enough to tell me what it is concerning which you want to consult me?"

"Certainly, doctor," she said. "I wish to be particularly candid with you, for I believe that only by so doing can you help me. But when you have heard my story I think you will agree that it is not necessary to know our identity. I have come some distance to see you, and to seek your advice. I do not want it to be known in my own circle that I have consulted you at all, because I would give anything rather than the condition of my daughter should be known."

"Oh! Then your daughter is the patient?" I enquired.

"Yes," she replied.

"Then why is she not here?"

"Because before you see her, I want you to hear the story, and tell me whether anything can be done. It is not a usual ailment, I assure you."

"Well, tell me all you can; I will promise to help you if possible, but I must know all the circumstances first," I said.

Mrs Fleat then narrated to me the following facts which I give, as nearly as possible, in her own words.

"My daughter is twenty - three years of

age. She is very well educated and rather accomplished, especially in music, which she studied abroad for several years after she left school. In appearance she is considered beautiful—but that you can judge for yourself when you see her. She is tall and fair. We are fairly well off financially, my husband occupying an important position at a high salary, and we have some private means. I mention this so that you may understand that she has been brought up to have practically everything that she might reasonably want. Her temperament, you will gather possibly, is what might be called artistic; she is highly strung, but I should never describe her as neurotic nor hysterical—except, perhaps, just recently. As far as I know, her life has been entirely happy and free from any trouble, unless the absence of brothers and sisters could be considered such, for she is an only child.

“Nearly two years ago we were all on the Continent during the summer, finishing our visit by a somewhat prolonged stay in Copenhagen. While there she fell in love with a young artist whom she met casually

in the Thorvaldsen Museum, through asking a question concerning a group of statuary. The artist was making a study of the great master's work, and, evidently attracted by my daughter, constituted himself our guide through the whole collection. This happened on several occasions, with the result that within a week they became mutually attracted to each other, and before three weeks they were engaged. I should prefer not to mention his name unless it is necessary.

"Neither her father nor myself raised any objection, for there was no reasonable objection to raise. We all liked him. They were a good deal together, making excursions almost daily to Klampenborg for sea-bathing and visiting Roskilde, and other places of interest. In the evenings they joined the happy throng in the innocent gaieties of the Tivoli. On our returning to England we left the artist still in Copenhagen, on the understanding that he would shortly follow and come and stay at our house.

"In due time this visit took place. He himself was alone in the world; both his parents were dead, and he had no near

relations. He possessed independent means. Their courtship and engagement ran the usual course of a young couple to all appearances devotedly attached to each other, and then—it suddenly ceased!

"I have never been able to ascertain what caused the estrangement; she absolutely refuses to speak of it, and has done so ever since the morning she received a letter from him, on reading which she fainted. When she recovered she told us that all was at an end between them, and that she could not bear to speak of it. From that day to this she has gradually altered, but quite recently she has shown such curious ways that I almost fear for her reason.

"Up to the time when her engagement came to an end she was rather a talkative girl, and a great reader. Lately she has become morose and silent and never reads anything—not even a newspaper. She will begin to speak, and then stop suddenly without completing her sentence, and, before she stopped reading, I noticed that if she were reading anything aloud she would also stop suddenly — apparently without any reason.

But even worse, to my mind, than this, is the dislike she has taken to her father, who adores her, and whom formerly she doted upon.



"I HATE YOU!"

They were simply chums; now she cannot bear his presence nor to hear his name mentioned. She has taken a number of other

curious dislikes—such odd things they seem. She used to be passionately fond of flowers, but the other morning before breakfast I saw her, from my bedroom window, stamping fiercely on a lovely clump of daffodils, and tearing others to pieces with her hands. As she passed under my window I distinctly heard her mutter — ‘I hate them, I hate them!’ Until lately, her love for all animals was one of her characteristics. She has a Scotch terrier, Donald, with whom it used to be her delight to play and walk. Recently I have seen her show what one can only call cruelty to the poor brute, and she never speaks to it now. Of her horse, however, she seems as fond as ever.”

Mrs Fleat paused. She was evidently speaking under the influence of the deepest emotion. I took the opportunity to ask a question or two.

“Is she always the same, or does her mood vary?”

“Oh, it varies very much,” she replied. “At times she is her old sweet self, a trifle sadder perhaps, but still herself. Then, for no obvious reason, she changes entirely and

shows all sorts of curious antipathies, such as those I have mentioned."

"What is her attitude towards yourself?" I asked.

"Just the same loving daughter she always was," replied Mrs Fleat. "To me she has not altered at all, except that she will not speak to me so much—as I say, she stops suddenly. But as far as her affection goes, it is just the same as ever."

"Does she write any letters?"

"No. That is another point I meant to mention. Formerly she was a regular and voluminous correspondent with some girl friends; now she never takes up her pen, and before she quite gave up writing, she would stop suddenly and dash down her pen, just as she stops her speech and reading."

"What about her general health? Her appetite, sleeping, and so forth?" I asked.

"She does not look well; I think she is getting thinner. But it is only since these curious outbursts that I have noticed this, and they date from the past three months or so."

"Do you think she is still in love with the artist?"

"I don't know, I am sure. She never mentions him. She did love him devotedly, I am certain of that; but I rather think she is of that temperament—many of us are, you know, doctor — which requires the presence of the loved one for a steadfast devotion."

"Have you consulted your family physician?" I asked.

"Oh yes! several months ago," she replied.

"What is his opinion?" I asked, with interest to know what would be the verdict from a presumably orthodox and skilled practitioner.

"He is very guarded in his opinion, but he does not disguise from us the fact that he thinks her mind is somewhat affected, and that it may become seriously so."

"What does he recommend as treatment?"

"He suggests a complete change of air and scene, and that she should be roused to take an interest in things as much as possible. You know, doctor, it sounds so simple; but we have tried place after place and neither air nor scene makes any difference."

"I should be surprised if it did," I replied.

"If I understand the case at all, it is caused neither by stale air nor monotonous scenery, and I, therefore, absolutely fail to comprehend why these things should cure her."

"Then you will help us?" Mrs Fleat asked eagerly. "You will undertake the case and do what you can?"

"Yes," I replied, "if you will take your doctor's advice once more and cause your daughter to take up her residence here where I can be near her and observe her. It will be a change of air and scene, I presume."

"That can easily be managed," she replied.

"There is one possible difficulty," I said. "Do you think that your daughter will be easily persuaded to place herself under my care? Sometimes, in these cases, there is no wish to recover; the patient, as it were, nurses her misery and makes herself worse, almost of her own will."

Mrs Fleat's reply astonished me.

"She is anxious that you should see her," she said. "When I told her that I was going to consult you, she begged me to do so and said that she was sure you could help her."

"If she used words to that effect," I said, "I have hopes. But how did she know about me?"

"Ah, doctor, you are better known than you think, although your patients—or some of them—do not care to advertise their ailments. Do you remember the little kleptomaniac son of Lady ——?"

"Yes. Certainly I do."

"Well, they are friends of ours, and we heard of that result. Now do you understand?"

"I have no further objections to urge," I said. "Bring your daughter here to stay for a time, and send for me when I can see her. I do not know whether I can do anything for her or not. I must think over all you have told me. It is undoubtedly a very curious, and, I am afraid, rather serious, case. It may be very difficult to get at the cause of the condition. On the other hand, it may be simple and removable. I hope it will be. I think, however, you should waste no time—her mind might give way in other directions."

"That is what our doctor says," she replied. "O doctor, for heaven's sake, save her! I

fear for her reason, and so does our doctor—I know he does!”

I promised to do all that I could, and Mrs Fleat left, promising to communicate with me as soon as they had found suitable quarters near.

Then I sat down to read carefully the notes I had taken, and to try and find some clue to this curious problem.

I confess that, from the outset, I was intensely interested in this case. It promised to be quite unique in some points, as far as my experience went. The more I thought over it the less chance I saw for any hope on what might be termed orthodox lines of treatment. It was not an orthodox case. This girl was apparently neither sane nor insane, but sane at one time and doubtfully so at others; sane on many matters, questionably so on a few. I felt that it would be futile and stupid to make up my mind until I had a personal interview, and that the line of treatment to be adopted must depend upon what I ascertained myself, in addition to what I already knew. I realised at once, however, that, for any hope of success, that treatment

must be mental, and that it was essentially a case for treatment by suggestion. Some powerful suggestion was probably dominating part of her mind and causing her to think abnormally. Experience had taught me that only suggestion itself could deal with suggestion, and then only if tried in the early stages of the condition. Once such morbid ideas became fixed there was but little hope, and every fear of ultimate melancholia, or other form of insanity.

The points which stood out clearly from the narrative of Mrs Fleat were: a marked alteration in demeanour consequent upon the termination of her daughter's engagement; definite changes in habit in connection with speaking, reading, and writing; a sudden dislike to certain individuals and animals where formerly there had been attachment—this dislike extending even to certain flowers—other animals still occupying their former place in her affections; instances of actual cruelty to living things—the dog and the daffodils; and, finally, commencing alteration in her general health. The curious fact that she wished to put herself under my care also

struck me. These points summarised the state of affairs, so far as they were then obvious.

If one had to give a diagnosis in words of such symptoms, one could only describe them as constituting a case of acquired antipathies. Things formerly loved were now apparently hated. Or were they feared? And if hated, why were they hated? — or why feared? What had happened to cause the changed mental attitude to father, dog, flowers, etc.? What had all these in common which brought them under this common antipathy? Yes; that was the point to be ascertained. What was the connection between these varied antipathies? Possibly there were others, too, which had not been noticed. I must find that out, and see if they could be linked up in any way with those already known. I felt sure that my investigations must follow this line.

Of course a severe disappointment in love often enough caused serious mental disturbance in a young girl for a time; but why this particular kind of alteration? The connection between the love disappointment and daffodils

was not obvious, unless the flower was associated with some love passage or experience. But that could hardly explain the same attitude to father, dog, speaking, writing, and reading. I dismissed that explanation as too simple and inadequate to account for the result. I felt sure it was something less obvious than that.

The case absorbed my thoughts for the succeeding days, until it absolutely fascinated me. The more I thought of it, the more difficulties I saw. I began to plan out my campaign, for I felt pretty sure that it would be in the nature of a battle between some idea, powerfully acting upon an active and hypersensitive brain.

Before I heard that Mrs Fleat had arranged matters so that I could see my patient I had made up my mind to study, with the greatest attention to detail, first the speaking, second the reading, and third the writing, of my patient. A really careful study of these three abnormal features in the case should throw some light on matters. I anticipated no trouble from the patient herself. The fact that she wished me to see her showed that, in all

probability, she would acquiesce in any line of procedure I wished to adopt; and if there were any difficulty in getting her to speak, read, or write in the ordinary way, she would probably be willing that I should hypnotise her and study these actions when in the state of suggestion.

My first task, obviously, was to gain her entire confidence. Much, perhaps everything, depended upon this. I knew that I should either succeed at once, or fail altogether in that. Experience had taught me that about myself with patients of the gentle sex. They either trusted me absolutely or not at all. Women seem to decide questions of that sort in a fraction of a second. A mere man takes half a lifetime to come to the same conclusion, and then, as often as not, he is wrong.

In due time I received a note from Mrs Fleat, intimating that she and her daughter were comfortably established in furnished rooms not far off, and that she would be glad if I would call and see Miss Fleat as soon as convenient.

To this I replied that I would come during

the next afternoon. I added that I should be glad if Mrs Fleat could arrange to see me for a few moments first, and then send her daughter to me alone.

Mrs Fleat awaited me in the drawing-room. She informed me that her daughter was steadily getting worse in all the directions she had spoken of formerly, and seemed to be settling down into a fixed melancholia. The patient was still, however, anxious to see me. Her appeal to me for help was most pathetic. Her own physician, on a recent visit, had given but little hope of improvement, and had suggested a "private home." Mrs Fleat was not deceived. She knew perfectly well that her child was on the verge of madness, and that no ordinary means would save her. I explained to her that there might be tremendous difficulties in the way of success, and that, in any case, progress would almost certainly be very slow.

"Now you had better tell Miss Fleat that I am ready to see her," I said.

Mrs Fleat left the room. I braced myself for a great mental effort. If ever I required a clear brain and a concentrated will it was

at this moment—and I knew it. Probably everything depended upon this first interview.

The door opened very quietly. A tall, thin, dark girl came in, closed the door, and stood with her back against it, her eyes dropped and her head averted. I was standing right across the room, opposite to her, with my back to the fireplace. For a few moments we stood thus, she still averting her head. I made no movement and said no word, but watched her closely.

Presently she began to fidget with her hands a little; she shifted her feet; she crossed her hands in front of her. Still her head was bowed. Her attitude was that of a naughty child in disgrace.

Then slowly and very timidly she raised her head and turned her eyes towards me—eyes of dark, lustrous beauty, but now with a hunted expression in them. She met my gaze steadily fixed upon her. At that moment I made my effort—and caught her attention. Like a flash it came to me that I had won the first move.

I stirred not one inch, but kept her eyes on mine. In response to a slight gesture of

my hands she began to move slowly towards me. Right across the room she stepped, her eyes never leaving mine for a moment, until she stood just before me.

She was trembling now—first slightly, then violently and in every limb. I saw the crisis was near. If I could hold out I should win. Then—suddenly—she turned deadly pale; her eyelids opened and closed quickly in succession; she threw her head back and fell on her knees, clutching my coat wildly as she burst into tears.

I do not know how much longer I could have held her. When she gave in I felt as if I had walked a hundred miles — utterly fatigued and done. I let her weep for a minute or two and then gently raised her and guided her to a couch, placing her in an attitude of rest. Her eyes were closed.

At last she spoke. She opened her eyes, gripped my hand fiercely, and looking into my eyes with an expression of despair, hopelessness and remorse—broke the long silence.

“Help me, doctor. For God’s sake help

me ; forgive me and help me. I am foolish and wicked, but I cannot help myself. Help me before I go utterly mad ! Speak to me ! I will do anything you wish. Only help me now ! ”

The struggle was over. The rest was merely a matter of time, ingenuity, tact, kindness, will-power and education. Gently I smoothed her brow, and with the usual mechanical movements on the eyebrows, added to quiet verbal suggestion, she sank into a peaceful rest, probably the first her poor tortured brain had enjoyed for many a day.

It was fortunate that I had fully realised the case as one of very complex psychology, or I might have spoilt everything by attempting too much all at once. That is a common mistake in this treatment, and results in rapid improvement which is only temporary. At this first sitting, therefore, as soon as she had passed into the suggestion stage, I devoted all my attention to securing her mental rest. I kept her under light hypnosis for over an hour, suggesting nothing more than mental clearness and rest, thus giving her storm-

tossed brain the quiet it so much needed. Finally, I gave the suggestion that she would gradually recover her perfect self-control and would behave perfectly normally. (I knew that this would be a matter of weeks or months, but it was important to plant the idea at once.) As usual, I told her she would sleep well, would wake free from any nervousness, and, lastly, that none could ever hypnotise her against her will, but that, if she were willing, she would become more amenable to my suggestions every day.

This last suggestion is one I always give. It has the effect of strengthening the patient's will-power from the very first, and training them to receive the ideas one wishes. It is a truly educative process.

Then I roused her, and she woke perfectly quietly and free from any excitement. We spoke of everyday occurrences for a few minutes, and she talked quite normally, without any sudden stoppages. Then I rang for her mother, and we all spoke together for some minutes. Presently I dismissed Miss Fleat by saying that I should see her at the

same time the next day. After she had left the room, her mother turned to me in amazement.

"It's a miracle, doctor!" she said. "She has not talked like that for weeks. She looked her old self again. How can I thank you?"

"Please don't do so at all, at least not for a long time yet," I replied. "We are only at the beginning of what, I fear, will be a very long and tedious process. But I feel justified in saying at once that I have every hope of success. She is a good patient, and has plenty of will-power left to work upon. That will save her. Do not be surprised, nor disappointed, if she resumes her curious ways before I see her again. She probably will. Just remember that if she can control herself for one hour, she can be taught to do so for several hours and, eventually, altogether. It is a matter of patience and training. Your daughter's brain must be treated as if it had never learnt control. It must learn all over again."

I then left the house. The evening was

devoted to thinking out my lines of suggestion—the most difficult and important part of this treatment.

On my visit next day, I found that my patient had remained her natural self for some hours after I had left, and had then relapsed every now and then, as far as speaking was concerned, but never so far as she was before. At intervals, however, most of the old symptoms had appeared. Nevertheless, she herself volunteered the statement that she felt "better and different."

It would occupy a whole volume to describe in detail all the proceedings of the next fortnight or so, during which I tackled each symptom in turn, bringing to bear upon each all the patience, sympathy, and tact at my command. My patient gradually improved in every way, and at the end of that time I thought I might venture to attack her curious antipathies. It was here that I expected the greatest difficulty. I did not wish to force her confidence and she had voluntarily told me nothing which threw any light on the curious association in her mind of father,

dog, flowers, etc. Moreover, I had discovered quite a number of other antipathies, just as strange. To deal with each individually would have taken years—the common factor must be discovered.

This discovery was not easily made ; indeed, it took me weeks before I hit upon a means of ascertaining what it was that was baffling me. Finally I had to resort to questioning her, but in such a way that did not violate any confidence that she might wish to withhold. I was driven to this by my utter failure to account for the one thing common to all the subjects in connection with which her curious antipathy exhibited itself. So difficult was this to get at, that at one time I almost gave up my conviction that there must be something in common in them all. I made two lists of subjects. In the one column I wrote all the headings of her antipathies ; in the other column I placed nearly related subjects to which she had no objection. I hoped, by concentrating my attention on this, to see a clue. Here is a portion of the list—it will interest my medical readers. It must be borne in mind that her antipathy to these

things was extreme, and even violent at times—not a mere aversion.

OBJECTS OF ANTIPATHY.	OBJECTS UNAFFECTED.
Patient's Father,	Patient's Uncle,
„ Dog,	„ Horse,
	„ Cat,
	„ Parrot,
Flowers, <i>e.g.</i> , Daffodils.	Lilies, violets, primroses, etc.
Certain newspapers, <i>e.g.</i> — <i>Daily Mail, Daily Telegraph, Daily News</i>	Other papers, <i>e.g.</i> — <i>Morning Post, Times, John Bull, Spectator, Answers.</i>
Some songs, <i>e.g.</i> , "Daddy."	Other songs.
and so on.	

When I began to question my patient upon these varied antipathies I was more puzzled than ever, because her replies seemed so contradictory.

"Why do you hate flowers?" I asked.

"I don't hate them, I love flowers," she replied.

"Do you love daffodils?"

"I think they are exquisite," she said.

"Then why did you trample them down in your garden?" I asked.

"I love the flowers but there is something connected with them I hate!"

"What is it? Do they remind you of some painful memory?"

"Yes, I think so; but *I don't know what it is!*"

Next I tried the animals.

"Why do you hate dogs?" I asked.

"How can you say that?" she replied. "I love all animals, especially dogs."

"Then why do you never take any notice of 'Donald'?"

"It's not the dog I dislike, it is—oh, I can't explain it! It's like the daffodils—just the same."

Evidently both daffodils and Donald, in some way, suggested something to her subconscious mind which caused her to act in an abnormal manner, while leaving her apparently ignorant of why she did so. It was my business to find this out. The subject of her father was a delicate one, but it had to be tackled.

"Why do you no longer love your father?" I asked.

"I adore him!" she answered. "How can you say such a cruel thing of me?"

"It is not usual to avoid speaking to those whom one adores," I said.

"I tell you I love him!" she said; "but I cannot speak to him."

"Why not?"

"Because he is—because I—— Oh, I don't know. Why is it?" She started up. "Tell me why is it? Why do I do these things?"

"That is what I must find out with your help," I said.

All these and similar questionings on the other points threw no light on the ultimate cause of her trouble. When I approached the topic of her former lover she spoke of him quite freely—somewhat to my surprise—only avoiding the mention of his name. She told me that her engagement ended because of an occurrence which made it impossible for them to remain engaged, but its exact nature she did not tell me. She said that it was not the loss of her lover which was causing her abnormal behaviour, she felt she was getting over that. At the same time, it was obvious that the cause was in some way connected with him, since the trouble dated from the breaking off of the engagement. It was, at any rate, the exciting cause.

I asked her if I had her permission to question her mother about anything concerning herself, and this she readily gave. Before

doing this, however, I wished her to try and do two of the things she had lately given up. I wished her to write me a letter and read aloud to me. I hoped in this way to find some clue. She agreed to try and promised to send the letter that night. It came next morning and ran thus:—

My kind physician,

How can I ever thank you sufficiently for all you are. I wish I could help you more. I feel better in myself every. It is just that I cannot certain things. My brain seems to stop at some moments as if something was controlling it—I can't explain the feeling. There are no evil spirits in people now, are there? Thanks so much for the roses you sent, they are lovely. Whatever you think I hated flowers, I can't imagine—I love them! I am looking for your visit to-morrow morning. I am to try speaking from a book, am I not? I haven't taken a book in my hand for ages.

Gratefully yours,
Edith Heat

There did not seem much to be gathered from this at first sight. The writing was normal and good, a lady's hand. It is reproduced exactly above. True the wording was a little careless, but not more so than in many girls' letters. Here and there a *word* or a *letter* was omitted. At the moment this did not seem important, but later on I saw its significance. It was not until I had made her read aloud to me and had subsequently questioned her mother, however, that I hit upon the true explanation. I thought it better to try the reading test under light hypnosis. She was easily placed in this condition, and next morning, having done this, I took the first book I saw on a shelf, opened it by chance, and gave it into her hands.

It happened to be that great novel of Harold Begbie's, "Tables of Stone." It opened at Chapter XII. I put it into her hands and spoke to her.

"Open your eyes and begin reading to me the chapter you see before you," I said.

Without any hesitation she began : "Charles Caversham, with a pile of books at his side, his feet crossed, his head resting

on his hand, was learning a Latin verb when——”

She suddenly stopped, closed her eyes, and let the book rest in her lap, still holding it.

“Read the next sentence,” I said.

Again she began: “The nervous eager boy looked up from his grammar as——”

Again a sudden stop, as before.

“Take the next paragraph,” I suggested.

She once more opened her eyes and fixed them on the page. Her lips twitched, she breathed quickly.

“I can’t begin it!” she said.

I looked at the words closely.

“Why not?” I asked.

“I hate that word!” she burst forth, throwing the book on the floor.

My excitement was intense. Surely here was a clue. What was the word at which she stopped? I picked up the book and turned to the passage. The word was “Diver,” the name of the hero. I looked at the preceding sentences, and sure enough, it was at the word “Diver,” that she had stopped in both cases. Why?

“Close your eyes and rest a moment,” I said.

I replaced the volume on the shelf and took down the one next to it. It was "The Greatest Life," by Gerald Leighton. It opened by chance, and I handed it to her.

"Read the first paragraph on that page to me," I said.

Without hesitation she began as before: "A scientific method in thinking, without which it is impossible to live the greatest mental life, is a delightful rarity to encounter. It follows, therefore, that the majority of people are utterly unable to appreciate in any adequate manner the scientific modes of thought of the best thinkers; their grand conceptions go over our heads, not into them, and what is grasped is but a caricature of the original. It is probable, for instance, that the majority of—of—of——"

"Well, the majority of what?" I asked encouragingly.

"Oh! I can't say that word!" she replied, putting the book down.

I snatched it from her in my eagerness to see what word it was at which she stopped. It was "Darwin!"

"Read the next paragraph, please," I said.

She took the book and read on: "So we go on, treating a mob, a class, a family, a nation, as if they were all so many machines made to a single pattern, all capable of absorbing equal amounts of food—of food—of—of——"

"Well, of what?" I asked.

"It's no use! I can't say the next word!" was her reply. With a gesture of fatigue she put the book into my hands.

The word at which she had stopped was—
Drink.

The test had gone far enough, so, after allowing her a little rest, I roused her.

I wrote down on a sheet of paper the three words which had been too much for her. I looked at them hard.

DIVER. DARWIN. DRINK.

What on earth had the words to do with each other? What had Diver, Darwin, and Drink in common? I looked again. I spoke them to myself aloud, when my patient had left the room, and I was awaiting her mother.

"Diver, Darwin, Drink. Darwin, Diver, Drink. Drink, Darwin, Diver. Diver, Drink,

Darwin. Drink, Diver, Darwin." The alliteration became confusing.

Like a flash it came to me! I rang the bell.

"Ask Mrs Fleat to come here at once," I said to the maid.

In a moment she came.

"Excuse my haste, Mrs Fleat. But please tell me—what is your husband's Christian name?"

"Desmond," she replied, in some astonishment.

"And what is the name of your daughter's dog?"

"Donald," she replied.

"And the flowers she ill-treated?"

"The daffodils, you mean."

"And her old song—that she now detests—what is it called?"

"'Daddy,'" she answered.

"And the name of the paper you took because she liked it best, and now will not read?"

"You mean the *Daily Mail*. What are you driving at, doctor?"

"Patience," I said, "I believe I have the mystery solved."

"Ask me anything, then, if it will help," she replied.

"Then tell me the name of her former lover," I demanded.

"There is no reason why you should not know. I am sure you will respect the confidence. His name was Dryden Dendy!"

"I knew it," I ejaculated. "I would have bet a thousand pounds it was full of 'D's'!"

"What do you mean?" she asked, utterly mystified.

"One moment," I said. "What is the name of the horse she still loves?"

"Peggy," was the reply.

"And the cat?" I continued.

"Toto," said Mrs Fleat.

"Precisely. And the parrot she always calls 'Polly,' of course. I see it all now, I need ask you no more. Mrs Fleat, your daughter is suffering from an extraordinary inability — precisely how caused I am not prepared at the moment to say — but an inability to speak words beginning with the letter D, to write words beginning with D, to love people whose names begin with D, or rather to love the names, or to like flowers,

songs, or anything else which involves the D-impression being presented to her mind. That is her whole malady, I now believe."

"But what could have caused her to get such a curious delusion?"

"It's not exactly a delusion," I replied. "Something has happened to Mr Dryden Dendy, or in connection with Mr Dryden Dendy, which has caused her to shrink so terribly from anything which suggests his name, even to the extreme of anything beginning with D. She cannot mentally formulate a word of that sort without having the painful suggestion brought before her. Hence she declines to say the word. Hence she will not write such words. Now I know why she crossed out the D in 'Edith' in her signature in her letter. I am sure that another examination of that letter, in the light of what I now know, will explain its peculiarities. I can see, dimly, how this impression is causing all the other abnormalities we have noticed. She loves her father as much as ever, but the sight of him suggests his name, and that suggests terror or pain or suffering of some sort. Make your mind easy, she will recover.

I see my way clear at last; it is merely a matter of time and patience. Her brain must be educated again in some things."

In the quiet of my study that night I pieced together all the complex items in this queer case, and thought over what I had to do. The rest of the treatment was easy and straightforward—it only required time. I had to begin with her as with a little child learning a difficult lesson. But I knew that as she gained control in one direction, it would rapidly come in others; and so it proved. A very few suggestions under hypnosis were sufficient to overcome the writing difficulty, as well as that of speaking. The reading was not so easy—it was amazing what power that D-sound had over her mind in some way. I have never met with anything quite like it in my experience.

It seems that the formulating of the letter D audibly started a train of sensations in her consciousness which at once inhibited the completion of the word or sound, and created pain. This being experienced once or twice soon caused her to avoid the D-sound altogether, and this became habitual. Then,

by a curious mental process, it was metamorphosed into an actual fear and hatred of anything suggestive of a D, and this led her mind—already off the normal track—to the excesses we have described.

The reading difficulty was ultimately conquered by giving her reading lessons under hypnosis, gradually introducing the objectionable sounds. Each lesson was immediately repeated in waking consciousness — a very valuable method of treatment in all suggestion. Finally I gave her a typewritten sheet to read out loud to me under hypnosis, almost every word of which began with a D. Then she repeated this when fully awake, and when she could do this of her own accord she was cured. The whole treatment took six months ; but the intervals were longer and longer between each visit during that time. By the time she could say "Daddy" once more, and show her real affection for her father, there was little left to do.

I need hardly say that, long before this, Mrs Fleat had given up her *nom de plume* and extended to me her fullest confidence. The only thing I never knew, and never asked,

was — what parted Edith from her lover. That was, and is, her secret; but it no longer spoils her life.

It all sounds very simple when stated in cold print, but the point of my story is this, my fellow-medico, that within a very few weeks from when I met her, this lovely and brilliant girl would have been certified by two of our profession and placed in an asylum. I have no hesitation in saying that ere long, in that case, she would have become actually insane, and probably ended her life in the madhouse.

To-day she is one of the happiest women alive, and whenever she writes to me she always begins her letter: "My Dear, Dear Doctor," using a specially big D.

XIV

THE GHOST OF THE *ALEXANDRIA*

ONE evening, recently, when I was correcting some of the manuscripts of the foregoing pages, I was interrupted by the announcement of the arrival of a very old medical friend, whose fondness for the sea had enticed him to follow the calling of a ship's surgeon. There were few parts of the world to which he had not sailed, and he had seen stranger things than any man I ever met. Whenever he returned to England he invariably came to see me before starting on his next voyage, and this was one of those occasions.

We were soon enjoying a yarn and smoke, and he was telling me of his last voyage.

"But what are you doing yourself?" he asked.

"Well, when you came in I was just correcting the manuscript of a story of a queer patient," I replied.

"Queer patient, indeed!" he said. "What do you land-lubbers know about queer patients! I'll bet I have seen more, and treated more, than any thousand of you."

"That's very likely," I answered.

"I'll tell you a yarn of one of them, and you can put it with the others. But that reminds me, did I ever tell you about the ghost of the *Alexandria*?"

"No; I don't remember it!"

"Oh, I must tell you that yarn first. Then I'll tell you about the queerest patient I ever had; but this is a good one."

He was off for an hour—I knew the symptoms. I never knew a man to hold a candle to him for telling a story. His memory was prodigious, and his experiences vast. I settled down for a long listening. This is the story he told me first, as near as I can give it in his own words.

.

There hangs round London docks a big, besotted loafer, ever on the lookout to claim

acquaintance with any Jack ashore who may have some spare cash about him. A sailor himself once, as he relates, but gave up the sea owing to an accident. With a drink or two on board, he will spin the only real and true yarn of the ghost of the *Alexandria*. There are other versions, but they are unreliable, and vary according to the financial state of the listener and—the beer.

Not so many years ago, the *Alexandria*, homeward bound, was loading in one of the Javanese ports. She was hauled off a few feet from the wharf, a narrow, steep gangway, with a guard rope on one side, the only means of access. An old Malay was crossing the gangway when he stumbled and fell overboard. In falling he struck his head, and after making one or two strokes he lay motionless in the water. He was on the point of sinking when one of the crew slipped down a rope that was fortunately hanging over the ship's side and saved the old man. He was slightly dazed, but soon came round, and, after thanking his rescuer, in fairly good English, walked slowly away.

A few days later the *Alexandria* sailed

for London, *via* the Canal. She carried Chinese firemen (they are not wanted in this yarn), and the sailors were European. They were quartered in the forecastle, officers and engineers' accommodation being amidships.

A peep into the "Sailor's Home" at dinner-time on the first day after leaving port revealed—not the jovial, rollicking tar of fiction, but a dozen very serious-looking individuals. Firstly, Douglas—a great hectoring bully, whose word had been law in the forecastle, owing to the fact that none had ever accepted his oft-repeated invitations to "put 'em up." Now he sat scared and silent. Oxton, shadow and echo of Douglas, and a stunted little Cockney withal, was in a like plight. Of the others, few seemed hungry except Billy, the boy—though he did not count—and Waters (a very reticent fellow who rarely spoke), and Finny, the last so-called because he was a Russian Finn with an unpronounceable name. His prominent blue eyes had an irritating way of settling upon an object or an individual in one long, wondering stare.

Cholera had been epidemic during their

stay in port. Several coolies, stowing cargo on board, had sickened while at work, and had been carried ashore to pass in their checks.

On the day before sailing the climax came. The men had been working aft all morning, and at eight bells hurried forward to dinner. Douglas—first, as usual, at meal times—bustling into the forecastle, tripped over a coolie lying on the floor.

Now the corpse of a man recently dead of cholera is not an encouraging sight to men living in hourly dread of that disease, and the immediate vicinity of the body may well be avoided. The port medical officer was summoned, and gave the usual orders for thorough cleansing and disinfection. He also addressed the usual few words to the crew, telling them there was but little risk of their contracting the disease, provided they followed certain instructions as to food and drink.

Notwithstanding this, the men waited the onset of certain well-known symptoms. Waters and Finny, and, of course, the boy—not that he mattered—alone remained philosophical.

"Why ain't yer eatin'?" growled Douglas at Billy.

"Sort of queer feeling inside," the boy replied.

This was answered by a smack on the head, and a curt order to get out on deck immediately, and not to make other people miserable. The Cockney started a feeble whistling, till Douglas looked at him—and the performance stopped.

A few miserable days passed, but the time came when cholera was mentioned no more.

One night they sat talking of the advent of Xmas, now nearly due. Douglas, an unwilling teetotaller, expressed particular interest in the subject, as the skipper, in the fulness of his heart, had promised each man a bottle of beer for dinner on that festive occasion.

Then one spoke of Xmas Eve.

"Blimey!" said Oxton, "if that ain't the night for ghosts!"

Douglas then gave a long dissertation on ghosts, their customs, habitats, etc., rounding off his remark with the statement that there were no such things. A short silence followed, then Finny broke in:

"There are ghosts. I've seen plenty."

There followed a strongly-worded negative from the bold Douglas, who also made some very uncomplimentary remarks about foreigners in general, and Russian Finns in particular, and the iniquity of their finding employment under the British flag.

Undismayed, Finny started a gruesome tale of a murder in his native village. When the ghost scene came on, he embellished it with tragic movements and suitable cries and groans, his eyes, the while, roaming from a skylight, opening just over their heads, to the place where the dead coolie had been laid, then to the open doorway, finally fixing themselves in a stare into the darkness of the night outside.

Douglas, who had been sitting with his back to the door, rose to his feet with the remark that such a blooming look would give any man the creeps. He knocked Billy, installed right at the Finn's elbow, off his seat, and occupied it himself. The yarn finished, doubt and ridicule were thrown broadcast, then all turned in.

The next night was insufferably hot. Waters

was keeping the look-out on the fore-castle head; the others were sitting or lying on the deck. The new moon gave a faint light, yet sufficient to reveal the presence of objects not too far distant. Douglas had just finished a graphic account of the fights he had never fought, and the men he had never knocked out, when a slight choking noise made all look round.

On the fore-hatch stood a large, dark figure. The eyes, greenish and luminous, roved with rapid glances from one to other of the crew. Then the shape advanced towards them.

In one, wild, fighting rush, they entered the fore-castle. Not all—for a couple of minutes later, the Finn walked leisurely in. At a word of command, and a well-directed kick from Douglas, Billy, white and trembling, closed the door.

Finny nodded once or twice.

“You all frightened! What I tell you, eh? There *are* ghosts! I’m no afraid! There one outside—*now*—for *you*!” He pointed at Douglas, and the statement passed unchallenged.

They sat, looking anxiously at one another

and talking in whispers, then crawled into their bunks and made a pretence of sleeping.

At one bell Waters called, through the skylight, to Douglas to turn out for the middle watch. The latter must have had an easy conscience, for he was the only one asleep, dead asleep too ; and no reply could be elicited from him. Waters struck eight bells, then walked in to waken the new look-out.

Still there was no response.

Then Douglas was hauled out of his bunk, and deposited, with a severe bump, on the flooring. Rising quickly, he rushed at the offender. The fight was brief, Douglas remarking that the light from the lamp was not sufficient for proper tactics, threw his clothes on and hastily went on deck.

A quiet request from Waters to resume operations next morning was ignored, and thenceforward peace and quiet reigned supreme.

As the days passed, the heat became more intense, but sitting out after dark was tabooed by all save the Finn and Waters. These two slept on deck, changing their positions nightly, according to weather conditions. The others

remained in the forecastle, with door closed, discussing their ghostly visitant.

On Xmas Eve they were engaged on their sole topic of conversation, when Finny, with a deeply muttered, "Ah," pointed upward. The green, gleaming eyes were peering down, and then a thin, wrinkled brown hand stole gently over the edge of the skylight. A dash through the doorway, and they found themselves out on the deck. The Finn, as unconcerned as ever, slowly followed, and hailed Waters, who was keeping watch.

Yes! he thought he had seen something.

Preferring the light of the forecastle to the dreaded dark outside, the men sneaked into their bunks, but sleep came not.

The Xmas dinner was a failure, even the beer tasted flat and stale.

The same night it fell to Douglas to take the middle watch. A few minutes before eight bells he was unfortunately smitten with fever and ague, and declared himself unfit for duty. The mate's beauty-sleep was broken into, and he was called forward to see the patient, with the result that, at a few seconds after midnight, Douglas was standing on the forecastle head,

alone. Never did mortal pray more for light, but the clouds were thick and completely obscured the rays of the moon. Four bells were



A THIN, WRINKLED BROWN HAND STOLE GENTLY OVER THE
EDGE OF THE SKYLIGHT

struck, staccato fashion, and Douglas stood, hoping that the next two hours would pass more quickly than the preceding.

Then a hand was slowly slipped into his.

Looking round he saw that dark, ghastly shape, the eyes blinking at him, the hand, thin, bony and hairy, still grasping his. With a yell that roused the forecastle, he was on the lower deck.

The fear was infectious and the crew were soon amidships. The noise brought captain and mate out of their cabins. Douglas, white and trembling, blubbered out his tale. Then began a recital of the two previous incidents. The evident distress on the men's faces so impressed the mate, that, slipping a revolver in his pocket, he hurried forward, followed at a respectable distance by the others. They found Finny and Waters sleeping side by side on the deck. The mate ordered Douglas to finish his watch, but the latter declined. In irons, on bread and water for the rest of the voyage; that was preferable to the horror he had encountered—another watch he could not keep. Nor could the others. So, till the end of the voyage, Waters and the Finn took the look-outs.

The next morning further search was made, by the captain's order.

A couple of covers, raised some inches for the purpose of ventilating the fore hatch,

suggested to the mate a possible hiding-place. These were lifted, and the mate jumped on to the cargo which reached to about four feet of the top of the hold. He commenced to search the after part, bidding Waters to look carefully round forward. On the mate and Waters reporting all clear, the captain concluded that the ghost must be looked for elsewhere. Every conceivable corner was examined, and nothing found to throw any light on the matter. Curtly telling the crew to report the next time they saw anything suspicious, the captain and mate walked aft.

They were now in the Red Sea, in one of the hottest months of the year, and with door, portholes, and skylight closed and clamped, lay sweating and steaming through the long hours of the night. Billy developed some interesting nightmare—first, it was a coolie lying dead on the floor, then green eyes shining at the portholes; lastly, a horrible hand that came right through the deck overhead.

This left them a broken, nerveless company that just managed to crawl through a short day's work. The cool of the Mediterranean braced them a little, but it was with prayers

of thanks, uttered and unuttered, that one fine morning they found the *Alexandria* rubbing her side against London dock, as if greeting an old acquaintance.

The crew were to be paid off, and the mate's inquiries as to who intended sailing the following trip were met by a negative from all but Waters. The Finn was going home to see his people, the others had had enough of sea-going to last for some time. Chests and bags were quickly packed, and with one final shiver Douglas and Company left the forecastle behind them for ever.

The weeks slipped by; all was ready for another voyage, when Waters reported himself to the mate and spoke as follows:—

“I don't like to start this trip under false colours, so should like to tell you all about that ghost, sir.”

“All about the ghost!” replied the mate. “I'd clean forgotten him! Well, go ahead.”

“Well, sir, it all began with that old Malay I fished out of the water. That same night he came down to the wharf, and earnestly begged me to go ashore with him. For the fun of the thing, I went. It was only a short

walk, through a bit of jungle, to his house, but when I got inside—well the Zoo wasn't in it.

"Snakes, alligators, birds—everything in the wild beast line—were scattered all over the show," he continued. "After a time, the old buck skipped out, and came back with the biggest monkey I ever clapped eyes on. He said something to the beast in his lingo, and blest if it didn't shake hands and sit down right alongside o' me! When I decided to make tracks for the ship, his ugliness rose and started to follow me. I asked the Malay to call it back, but he told me it was my present. Then it struck me he was trying to pay up for the good turn I did him in the morning. Big and all as the brute was, I determined to bring him home. He came on board quietly, and I stowed him away behind some cases in the forehold—just where I looked the day you and I were on the hunt. I used to feed him on some limes and bananas I bought ashore.

"I thought I had tied him up securely enough, but he picked the knots and got loose, and you know the result. I sneaked him back safely to his quarters, and as Finny and I had

the deck to ourselves at night, I thought I was going to land him safely. But when the fruit was finished, he sickened and refused all food. Then he began to cough and soon died, and I dumped him overboard one night. The nicest and quietest beast I ever saw, sir, more like a human being than a monkey. His death made me almost cry, and I could have got eighty pounds for him alive in London."

"Wonder I never tumbled to that," said the mate. "Well—go and sign on."

The *Alexandria* had some difficulty in securing a full crew, as the story had been told in ten different ways in half-a-hundred public-houses. But the sailorman, with neither board, lodging, nor money, will ship on anything, and soon the old boat was once more steaming south. She still tramps round the world, but the ghost never walked again.

XV

“NICE BOY”

“O F course I admit that Water’s monkey wasn’t exactly a patient of mine, but I once had one that was,” continued the doctor. “I’ve had a lot of queer ones. I have had Chinese coolies, Mahomedans, Hadjis, Dagoes and British steerage passengers. The latter were not the best. The queerest of all, perhaps, was ‘Nice Boy.’”

“A nickname for someone, I presume,” I said.

“Well, yes, in a way,” replied the doctor. “I’ll tell you about him.”

This was the story.

He was an orang—and a gentleman.

My acquaintance with him began at Singapore. We were lying in the roads, homeward bound. Early on the morning of the sailing day, a sampan bumped into us. It carried four roughly-built cages, each containing two

orangs. A Chinaman was in charge of the whole consignment. He talked a lot, wore a pigtail, and was lighter complexioned and less hairy than his fellow Orientals.

The cages were soon hoisted aboard, and the Chinaman overboard.

Of the eight monkeys, four were old, and stood a little over four feet in height. The others were younger, and averaged about two feet. Aboard ship, nicknames are soon bestowed on those who, by reason of their popularity or eccentricity, are deemed deserving of them, and thus it was that of the four large oranges one was called Kruger (it was at the time of the Boer war), and his stable mate was given the name of a woman notorious in the East. Here I shall call her Mrs X.

Only one of the others was given a name—"Nice Boy"—and he did not belie it.

Neither Kruger nor Mrs X ever became patients of mine, though Kruger caused me to have to attend to myself. One blazing hot day I gave him a drink of water, and he displayed his gratitude by flashing out a paw through the bars of his cage and gripping me by the thigh. The pain of gout was a mere

bagatelle to what I suffered for a day or two. Kruger also presented me with another patient in the shape of the bo'sun, who had charge of the cages. The bo'sun was caught by the scalp, and lost most of it. I omit his remarks.

The smaller monkeys were taken out of their cages every morning and given a little exercise on deck. Hand in hand "Nice Boy" and I promenaded the deck, and when we had both had enough of it, I would sit down in my deck chair. He would climb on my knees, and as our conversation was limited to looks, we indulged in big "thinks."

He was the only monkey I ever saw that could look one straight in the eye for any reasonable time.

He was gentleness itself, and had a smile that was unmistakable.

The monkey's food consisted of limes, bananas, and boiled rice, but, unfortunately, after we were about ten days out from port, the fruit petered out and sickness broke out among the monkeys.

The unnamed fell ill first, and their trouble appeared to me to be tuberculosis, though it may have been plague or pneumonia. The

commonest cause of death in the orang in captivity is said to be congestion of the liver, probably induced by the want of the acids in the limes and other fruits which the orang is accustomed to feed upon when free in the jungle.

However, I stuck to my diagnosis of pulmonary trouble, and the result was that soon only three were left to us—"Nice Boy," Kruger, and Mrs X.

Then, to the regret of everyone on board, "Nice Boy" fell ill. I was promptly in attendance, and, with the bo'sun as assistant and chief nurse, devoted all my spare time to the task of trying to save the patient's life.

I did not take his temperature, for I did not know the normal in his race, but he was percussed and auscultated enough to satisfy a hypochondriac. He took medicines readily enough, quinine, chlorodyne (for later symptoms), also egg and milk mixture and stimulants.

His illness went from bad to worse, and the end came one very hot night in the Red Sea. It was about four bells when I paid my last visit to him. He was lying on the settee in

the bo'sun's cabin, a clean pillow under his head, the bo'sun kneeling by his side and administering sips of whisky, which he had just bought and paid for out of his own pocket.

"Nice Boy's" pulse foretold the end approaching, so, along with the bo'sun, I sat with him until he handed in his checks.

He went out very quietly, smiling distinctly, all gratitude, before he did so.

"Well, if they are going to die with whisky inside them, they can die without," said the bos'un, "and no more nursing for me now that "Nice Boy's" gone."

We buried him early next morning, and so were left with the two undesirables alone—Kruger and Mrs X.

In due time we arrived at Amsterdam, where we were met by an agent sent by the London firm to whom all the oranges had been consigned. He arrived just in time to receive Mrs X's last dying speech and confession. Kruger was alone, as wicked and as vicious as ever.

He was carried off to Rotterdam next day, *en route* for London. We heard, subsequently,

that about half-way across the Channel he died suddenly. Heart failure was given as the cause of his death.

I am inclined to think he was a rabid anti-vivisectionist, and the thought of the reception he was about to meet with in London was too much for him. Be that as it may, he died, and there was one friend less in the world.

“Nice Boy” was a horse of another colour. I often think of him, and wish that no passing shark disturbed his last sleep. I like to imagine that he sank straight down into the depths, and that the coral insects took charge of him and built over him a grand mausoleum.

Perhaps, someday, for him, too, the trumpet shall sound and he shall be raised up—a real white man.

